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LECTURES

ON

SCEPTICISM,

DELIVERED IN

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BY LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF LANE SEMINARY.

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THE following lectures, delivered in Boston, in the year 1831, and in Cincinnati, in the year 1833, are now presented for the patronage of the christian public. They have been withheld for some time, as it was the original intention of the Author, to have added a few lectures in the same volume, on the Republican Tendencies of the Bible, and on several doctrinal subjects, as intimately connected with Scepticism. His numerous engagements having prevented him from completing his design, it has been thought best to place before the public those which have been delivered.

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LECTURE I.

CAUSES OF SCEPTICISM.

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1 TIMOTHY, III. 7.

EVER LEARNING, AND NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.

TRUTH is the reality of things—It is natural as it respects the material world, and moral as it respects mind, accountability, and moral government. Our knowledge of truth is by consciousness, intuition, the senses, and evidence. Consciousness is the mind's recognition of its own being, powers, and actions. Intuition is the mind's perception of obvious, primary truths, which are the elements of demonstration—such as, that every effect must have a cause; and that the parts are equal to the whole. It is intuition which constitutes the premises of demonstration, the primary truths being seen by the mind, and each step in the process, also, being a matter of intuition, or of mental perception. The reports of the senses are called knowledge, because they so uniformly correspond with the reality of

things, that occasional aberration occasions no distrust, but rather confirms the general rule. There is a yet wider field of knowledge which lies without the sphere of consciousness, and beyond the range of intuition, and the cognizance of the senses, the realities of which are certified to us by evidence; and the confidence produced is called belief. The evidence which sustains belief, is either the evidence of human testimony, or the accumulation of probabilities from the uniform operation of the laws of nature. This last evidence rests on the self-evident proposition, that no effect can exist without a cause—that what has been and is, will continue to be, where there is no perceived cause of change, derived from a supposition of a stated order of cause and effect; and rises from faint probability to moral certainty, according to the frequency and uniformity of the effects produced. Had the sun never risen before to-day, the evidence of its rising to-morrow, would be no greater than the appearance of a meteor in the sky would be of its return. But had the meteor appeared as uniformly as the sun has appeared, the evidence in both cases would be equal, of a stated order of cause and effect.

The difference between demonstration and moral certainty, is, that in one case the mind sees the object of comparison, and sees the result, which, of course, is knowledge; but in the other, derives its confidence from the perception of probabilities multiplied till they produce confidence, or moral certainty. On the whole, consciousness, intuition, the senses, the evidence of testimony, and analogy,

all rest on the supposition, that things are as they seem to be, and will continue to manifest the same attributes and results.

Scepticism is a state of mind in which these constitutional grounds of certainty fail to produce confidence. Sometimes the evidence does not satisfy the mind, in respect to its sufficiency; and in other cases, where the argument seems to be intellectually conclusive, it fails to produce any corresponding sense of the reality and certainty of the things proved. Sometimes, in cases of mental alienation, confidence is suspended, and men doubt their own being, or personal identity. When it respects intuition, demonstration loses its power. When the senses are distrusted, experimental knowledge fails. Instances are not uncommon, in which persons have supposed themselves, or their friends, to have become some other person; and I have just read of a gentleman who, for two years past, has refused to leave his dwelling, from the full persuasion that he is a tea-pot, and should endanger his earthen vessel by an unrestrained intercourse with external objects.

It is the field of moral government, however, and accountability, over which the mist of darkness is apt especially to gather, and doubts to settle down. For here the temptation to doubt, is greatly enhanced by sinful character and its liabilities; and the facilities of perversion and distrust, from the nature of the evidence, are proportionably multiplied.

It is scepticism in relation to the being and gov-

ernment of God, and our relations to it as accountable subjects, as disclosed in the Bible, which will constitute the subject of this lecture.

I employ the term Scepticism in preference to the terms Atheism, Infidelity, and Heresy, because these are more invidious, and because scepticism marks more accurately the state of this entire class of minds. In fact, there are few who positively disbelieve the being of God, or the inspiration of the Bible. To doubt, is commonly the extent of human attainment, in throwing off reluctant responsibility to the government of God. The Atheist does not know that there is no God. He merely does not believe it, and doubts. The Deist does not disbelieve the inspiration of the Bible. He is merely not convinced that it is true, and doubts. Those who reject the received doctrines of the Bible, do not fully disbelieve them. They fear, often, that they are true,—hope earnestly that they are not, and doubt.

The present is eminently an age of scepticism throughout the world. Pagans are becoming sceptical in respect to their ancient systems,—Mahometans are beginning to distrust their ancient Prophet,—and Papists to distrust the infallibility of His Holiness, and the Church. And Protestants, instead of taking things upon trust, are with increased determination, appealing from the decisions of men; and even sceptics themselves, are beginning to doubt, whether in their sceptical wanderings, they have not got out of the w y and may not be in danger of being lost.

Whenever an epidemic sweeps over the world, we take it for granted that there is some universal cause; and on the same principles, when we witness the wide-spread aberration of mind, on the subject of evidence, we conclude that there are some causes of corresponding extent and power, which produce the result.

It will be the object of this lecture to develope some of the causes of this mental phenomenon, as respects the being of God, the inspiration of the Bible, and the exposition of some of its doctrines.

Undoubtedly, the generic cause without which all others would be powerless, is to be sought in the alienation of man from God, and his deep aversion to the responsibilities of his perfect and eternal government. It might not at first be supposed, that a perfect government, consulting wisely and benevolently, the highest good of every subject, could be the subject of aversion; and to loyal minds, it would not be; but to the disloyal, its very perfection and stability are its terrific attributes. An attempt to execute strictly the laws of the land, on all points, would create a revolution—not because the laws are not good, but because men are evil. And it is because God is good, and men are evil, that they are averse to responsibility, and seek to alleviate their fears by the interposition of uncertainty and doubt. They are willingly negligent of the acquisition of evidence, and slow of heart to believe what is proved, and dexterous, by inattention, to throw the testimony into a quick oblivion, and per-

petuate around them a sceptical and unrealizing state of mind.

The great perversion of christianity during the dark ages, by the downfall of the Roman empire, the incursion of the northern barbarians, and the extinction of civil and religious liberty, has been, from age to age, a source of prejudice against christianity, and a fruitful cause of declamation and scepticism.

During the midnight which settled down upon the world, by the extinction of science and religion, the feudal system arose, which lies at the foundation of that inequality of rank and property which characterizes and curses modern Europe. To perpetuate this unjust monopoly, the state gave its protection to the church, and the church gave its terrific power to the state, until at length the latter became the ascendant, and ruled the world with a rod of iron. Under this ecclesiastical despotism, the nations of the civilized world groaned, travailed in pain a thousand years. During this long night, liberty, and virtue, and vigorous enterprise slept in chains, and were punished as felons, while no debasement, or impurity, or fraud, or cruelty, which human ingenuity could invent, or human power execute, was unpractised. These abominations of ecclesiastical despotism, have brought upon christianity an odium, and surrounded the system with a jealousy, which the Protestant Reformation, and the restoration of civil and religious liberty, have not been able to wipe away. And to this day, the disciples of those who achieved this illustrious eman-

cipation, are involved in the odium against christianity, created by the priesthood, whose horrid despotism their great predecessors were employed to overthrow.

The anti-christian conspiracy, the long-delayed but terrific result of perverted christianity, has given a new impulse to the cause of scepticism.

The revival of letters at the reformation, which emancipated half Europe, produced so much light in countries where ecclesiastical dominion still maintained its empire, as rendered the darkness visible and intolerable, and produced, first, Deism, and at length Atheism, and the French Revolution. For more than half a century, the conspirators attempted, by argument and ridicule, to emancipate the people from the power of superstition and the priesthood, and the prostituted energies of civil government, until they came to the conclusion, that while irresponsible men were permitted to wield the sanctions of Christianity, there could be no liberty; and that there was no way to emancipate the nation, but to obliterate all belief in the being of God and the Bible, and to sweep away every vestige of Christianity. And this they systematically attempted, and most thoroughly accomplished, by falsehood, by ridicule, and by argument, until aided by the corruptions of the reigning system, they succeeded in obliterating from the mind of a nation, all traces of belief in the being of God, and a future state. The explosion was terrific. It did, indeed, for a time, suspend the entire action of the divine government, and overturned thrones and

altars: but it blew to atoms, also, the conspirators, and all their chimerical hopes. It was like the uncapping of a volcano, whose fires rolled one continuous sheet of desolation over all. It was amid voices, and thunderings, and a mighty earthquake, that the tremendous system fell. But though the effort failed to overthrow the government of God, and the world has been warned of the terrors which await an Atheistical political Millennium, their specious writings still remain to pervert those who have forgotten their results. There is in them no great profundity of talent, or ground of confidence; but there is in them the best possible adaptation to unhinge and unsettle mind; and whoever reads them with implicit confidence will be subverted. Charged with ridicule, like the poisoned arrow, they inflict a double death—by the stroke they destroy; and to make assurance doubly sure, by the venom which they throw into their system, they destroy.

The attempt to repress scepticism by authority, and the odium of hard names, has served rather to augment than to stay the malady.

It is not the plan of heaven, that truths which lie within the sphere of evidence, should be obtained without mental effort. Acquisition by investigation, and delight in action, is a part of the mind's everlasting employment and blessedness. Men ought to think for themselves, as really as they ought to eat for themselves; and if to prevent infidelity, you repress investigation, you may have uniformity, indeed, but it will be that of vacant minds. You may avert storms, but it will be to secure stagna-

tion and putrefaction. It is not true, however, that free and independent thought tends to infidelity. There always have been minds, and there always will be, who will not submit to dictation, or tamely commit to memory other men's opinions; and it is to such men that the reformation owed its birth, and from whom the Bible has received its most able defence. And if, as incident to such high action, there should be some who sometimes miss the mark, they are not to be treated as outlaws. You may intimidate the abject in this manner, but assuredly you will raise up around the church an army of powerful, embittered assailants, to make reprisals, by the subversion of her sons. No doubt men are accountable to God for their dangerous errors, and their mischievous tendency may properly be exposed; but it should be done in the language of compassion, towards them that are out of the way, and not in the language of contempt and vituperation.

It is not uncommon for men to mistake their feelings of unreconciled aversion to truth, for lack of evidence.

We are not satisfied, they say. We are not convinced. We are ready to believe when the evidence is sufficient. When the whole secret is, that they are not pleased. To the disobedient, law always appears unreasonable. The entire anti-social conspiracy of thieves, robbers, burglars, pickpockets, and swindlers, look upon our laws and institutions with aversion, and are deeply prejudiced, and virulent in their opposition. They regard separate property, and government, as a usurpation, and

their own disgrace and exile as an unreasonable persecution. And thus, and for the same reasons, do sinful men feel towards the government of God, and they call that insufficient evidence which fails to remove the discontented feeling.

Another fruitful cause of scepticism is found in the supposed irresponsibility of man for his opinions.

For that which is constitutional, instinctive, and unmodified by volition, doubtless we are not accountable. And if opinion were formed without the modifying influence of the heart, the maxim might be just. But it is not so. There is no place where passion, prejudice, interest, and aversion, have more power. It is the will which sends out to summon the witnesses, on one side only, or on both, as it shall decide—which shuts the eye, and stops the ear, and suspends the recording pen, and is all awake, *currente calamo*, when the side testifies which favors inclination. It is the will which writes the testimony upon sand, or upon brass, as it favors or offends. It is the will—the busy dexterity of an evil heart,—which gathers up and piles into the scales, all the specious arguments which favor inclination, and keeps out the arguments which would turn them against predominant desire—and when the light is too overpowering, to render an erroneous verdict possible, men see, as in a glass, the truth, and straightway, from inattention, willingly forget its image and superscription; and even where conviction maintains its empire, move the tongue in opposition

to the better judgment. Such being the meddling and powerful dexterity of the heart, it needs powerful responsibility to bind it to good behavior. Among holy beings, responsibility is the guardian of virtuous action. Nothing in Heaven thrives without it; and on earth, among alienated subjects, its cessation is desperate licentiousness. How can it be expected that men will toil through extended investigations, and hold the balance even against fear and diversions of interest or passion, without motive? As well might morality be reconciled with total irresponsibility of action, as an enlightened and correct belief.

The demand of evidence on moral subjects, which the nature of mind renders impossible, is another cause of scepticism.

Why, it is said, could not God make unbelief impossible, as in consciousness and demonstration? Because the truths to be proved lie beyond the limits of consciousness, or the scope of the mind's intuition, or the cognizance of the senses. Who can demonstrate the history of the American revolution, the adoption of the constitution, or its correct exposition? The great business of life is guided by experiment, analogy, and testimony; and though it admits of moral certainty, it admits of prejudice, and folly, and wilful evasion. Let one of these philosophers put in practice his own maxim, and we shall perceive his folly. He sends for his physician—Sir, can you demonstrate that I am sick, and what ails me, and what will cure me? Not exactly,—but I perceive symptoms of indisposition upon you.

I know by observation what disease they indicate; and by experience, I have ascertained the remedy. None of your quackery—I am not a man to be imposed upon. Demonstrate to me that I am sick, and what ails me, and what will cure me, or I have no further occasion for your services. He sends for his merchant. But first I wish to be certified of the correctness of your charges. Can you demonstrate that these articles were taken? I can prove it by satisfactory evidence. I shall not be satisfied by any evidence but demonstration. He sends for his attorney. I think it probable that I may soon leave this loose-jointed world. Can you inform me how I can demonstrate my last will and testament, in favor of my beloved wife and children? Indeed, sir, I cannot. Then pettifogger, leave me, as I hope soon to leave this world of visions and of doubts.

The pushing of investigation without first principles, competent instruction, and study, is a fruitful cause of scepticism. The dependence of high and sublime truths on those which are obvious, is such, that no man who neglects the elements of knowledge can possibly unlock and enter her secret chambers. What mind can reach the depths of the mathematics, the heights of astronomy, or the secrets of chemistry, without attending to the alphabet of these sciences? What progress has ever been made by man in knowledge, but as theories have been abandoned, and intuition, and experience, and evidence, made the basis of knowledge; and yet, without lamp, compass, or chart, or study, men plunge into the profound of theology, and grope, and rend, and

involve the subject, until desperation or despondency puts an end to their fruitless labor, in a state of scepticism. It is a law of heaven, that men shall acquire knowledge on all subjects, in the first instance, by instruction, and careful, persevering mental application. But sceptical men insist on being self-taught, and that, also, without the tax of patient mental application.

The pushing of investigation beyond the boundaries of knowledge, is a frequent cause of discouragement and scepticism—going beyond the sphere of consciousness, or of intuition, or of the senses, into the territories of theory, and twilight, and conjecture. These, often, are men of vigorous minds and impatient desire; and comet-like, launch forth in their fiery career: but having gone beyond the centripetal attractions of the moral universe, they fall by their own density, and flounder amid the bogs and quagmires of chaos and old night, or like the adventurous navigator, they launch out on an unknown sea, tempest-tossed and not comforted; ever dreaming that some land is near, and straining their sightless eyeballs upon darkness, in the constant expectation of the bursting out of some great light, to whom is still reserved the blackness of darkness. For though their strength were equal to that of Polyphemus, it is exerted without vision in smiting upon the waters, to raise a mist about their own heads.

The society of sceptical men, who are scoffers and partizans in the warfare against Christianity is a powerful cause of scepticism.

All whose confidence in the Bible falters, are not scoffers. Many venerate Christianity and would by no means impair its influence on other minds, who feel, and sometimes lament the unsettled condition of their own. But there are men who are inflamed with the madness of unbelief, and who associate and systematize their efforts, to undermine the confidence of the community in Christianity, and to the young who fall under their influence their words of scorn are terrific as batteries, contagious as the plague, corrosive as canker and deadly as poison. In their associations they assail the inexperienced with false statements which they are not able to contradict, with sophistry which they cannot detect, and with objections which they cannot answer, and with blasphemies made eloquent by the inspiration of the bowl, which amaze and confound them. The den of lions and the retreat of adders and vipers, are not more perilous to life than these evil communications are to a sound mind and confidence in evidence.

LECTURE II.

THE

CAUSES AND REMEDY

OF

SCEPTICISM.

COLOSSIANS, II. 8.

BEWARE LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER THE TRADITION OF MEN, AFTER THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND NOT AFTER CHRIST.

PHILOSOPHY is the nature which God has given to things, as perceived by the human mind—to matter and to mind, in the endless relations of cause and effect, motive and choice; and so far as the properties and laws of created things lie within the cognizance of our faculties, they constitute the material of all knowledge and of all experience.

The bible itself, while it never professedly teaches, always assumes and never contradicts the true philosophy of things. When it describes things as they appear to the eye, the appearance corresponds with the description; when they assume the nature, or attributes, or relations and consequences of things, observation verifies always the

accuracy of the assumption. It cannot be interpreted without it, and cannot be explained in opposition to it. Indeed the interpretation of language, as figurative or literal, turns on the known properties of the subjects spoken of; and of several meanings possible, the nature of the subject decides the selection.

The difficulty in the primitive age was, and ever has been, that false philosophy has been interpolated in nature's book, and the attempt pertinaciously made to accommodate the bible to those facts which never happened; and to make those theoretical apparitions the expositions of truth;—a process which has kept torture upon holy writ, and an earthquake in the church to this day; and never will the river of the water of life run pure and copious, and irresistible, extending universal life in its course, till all the interpolations of a false philosophy are blotted out from nature's page, and rent from the system of interpretation, and thrown away.

With these remarks in view, I proceed to observe, that the creeds of the reformation are also made often the occasion of perplexity and doubt, to inexperienced minds.

They contain unquestionably the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, and they have stood through ages against the encroachments of error—as the iron bound shores to the ocean. But they were constructed amidst the most arduous controversy that ever taxed the energies of man, and with the eye fixed upon the errors of the day

and on the points around which the battle chiefly raged; on some topics they are more full than the proportion of the faith now demands; some of their phraseology also once familiar, would now without explanation inculcate sentiments which are not scriptural, which the framers did not believe and the creeds were never intended to teach.

They present also the results of investigations without giving to the reader the intervening steps, without which minds not favored with leisure and disciplined by study, could not easily arrive at the conclusions.

Of course they appear rather as insulated, independent, abstract propositions, than as the symmetrical parts and proportions of a beautiful and glorious system of divine legislation, for maintaining the laws and protecting the rights of the universe, while the alienated are reconciled and the guilty are pardoned—and though as abstract truths correctly expounded, according to the intention of the framers, they unquestionably inculcate the system of doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures—and though, as land-marks and boundaries between truth and error they are truly important; yet, as the means for the popular exposition and the saving application of truth, they are far short of the exigencies of the day in which we live—mere skeletons of truth compared with the system clothed and beautified, and inspired with life, as it exists and operates in the word of God. Unhappily also—some of the most important truths they inculcate are in their exposition so twisted in with

the reigning philosophy of the day, as to be in the popular apprehension identified with it and are made odious and repellant by its errors, as if these philosophical theories were the fundamental doctrines of the bible. There is no end to the mischief which false philosophy, employed in the exposition and defence of the doctrines of the reformation, has in this manner accomplished. Good men have contended for theories, as if they were vital to the system, and regarded as heretical those who received the doctrine of the bible and only rejected their philosophy. They have cried out against and renounced philosophizing, when it was their own philosophizing which divided and agitated the church. In this manner the church has been filled with controversies, and feuds, and jealousies—and intelligent men offended alike by absurd philosophy aud unchristian controversies about it, have in the conflict of opinion become discouraged and disgusted—and have either adopted heretical opinions or become sceptical. It is my deliberate opinion that the false philosophy which has been employed for the exposition of the Calvinistic system, has done more to obstruct the march of Christianity, and to paralyze the saving power of the gospel, and to raise up and organize around the church, the unnumbered multitude to behold, and wonder, and despise, and perish, than all other causes beside. There is no subject which so moves my compassion or fills my soul with regret, or my heart with the feeling, "Oh that my head were waters,

and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

Nor is it to be expected that the gospel will ever be attended with its primitive power in sudden and numberless conversions—till it is again, as it then was, preached in demonstration of the spirit, and of power unobstructed by the clouds and darkness of a false philosophy. The points especially affected by this philosophy are vital to the principles of moral government, and adverse to the constitutional perceptions of truth, the universal dictate of common sense, and the unequivocal elements of accountability as recognized in human government, and recognized and sanctioned in the bible, and as employed by the holy spirit in convincing men of sin, and of God's justice in their condemnation. If they are not absurd, nothing is absurd, and if they are not false, nothing is false, and if according to them the conduct of God is not indefensible and unjust, it is only because what God does is right, simply and only because he does it, and that nothing which he does can be unjust.

The points to which I allude as violated by a false philosophy, are the principles of personal identity, by which the posterity of Adam are distinct from or confounded with their ancestor, and the principles of personal accountability and desert of punishment, as men are made accountable and punishable for his conduct, or become liable to sin and misery, as a universal conse-

quence. The nature of sin and of holiness considered as material qualities or the substance of the soul, or as instincts, or as the spontaneous action of mind under moral government, in the full possession of all the elements of accountability. And above all, the doctrine of the decrees of God—and the universal certainty of all events to his fore-knowledge—as they are either unexplained or explained by a false philosophy.

To which may be added the nature of the atonement and its extent, and the doctrines of election and reprobation as they shine in the bible or through the medium of a perverting philosophy. Whatever of these philosophical theories appertained to the system during the arduous conflict for civil and religious liberty against the Papal despotism of modern Europe, men endured, even swallowed them unhesitatingly, almost unthinkingly, in the presence of a greater evil; but since the conflict has passed away, and the nature of mind and moral government is better understood, and the numbers who think and will think for themselves multiply, these repellencies of false philosophy have steadily increased, and will increase, till that which is adventitious and false is relinquished—and the truth is preached in its purity and unbroken power.

These evils of philosophy have however been greatly aggravated by the caricatures of Calvinism, which on all sides have been multiplied.

I have never seen or heard a correct statement of the Calvinistic system from an oppo-

nent. Consult almost any oracle of opposition as to what is Calvinism, and the response will be, Calvinism is that horrible system which teaches that God has foreordained and fixed, by irresistible omnipotence, whatsoever comes to pass; that he has made a very small number of mankind on purpose to be saved and all the rest on purpose to damn them; that an atonment by weight and measure has been made for the elect only, but which is offered to the non-elect on conditions impossible to be complied with, and they are damned for not accepting what did not belong to them and could not have saved them if they had received it, and that infants as well as adults are included in the decree of reprobation, and that hell no doubt is paved with their bones.

It is needless to say that falsehoods more absolute and intire were never stereotyped in the foundery of the father of lies, or with greater industry worked off for gratuitous distribution from age to age.

False conceptions of the nature and prerogatives of reason have been another abundant cause of confusion and scepticism.

Reason considered as a faculty is the mind itself acting upon evidence and moral fitness, and reasonable is whatever the mind perceives to be conformed to some acknowledged standard of truth or rectitude.

In the presence of competent testimony belief is reasonable. In natural philosophy what-

ever accords with the laws of matter is reasonable, and in moral government and theology whatever accords with the nature of mind and free agency and the principles of law and moral government is reasonable, and in relation to the comprehensive purposes of God that plan is reasonable which will best develope his power and wisdom and goodness in the creation and government of the intelligent universe.

While correct conceptions of reason as a faculty prevail and a correct standard of what is reasonable is maintained, the decisions of the mind within the sphere of its competency may be relied on, and the maxim that nothing is to be believed which is contrary to reason is true, meaning only that nothing is to be believed, which contradicts our consciousness or our intuition or our senses or without evidence, or which is contrary to the known laws of the natural or moral world, or to those principles of order which God himself has rendered too obvious to be mistaken or controverted.

But the fact is that loose and incorrect conceptions of reason, as a faculty of mind, prevail—and also concerning what is the external standard of what is reasonable and unreasonable.

By some, reason is deified and clothed with a sort of unerring omniscient intuition, in respect to all sorts of matters and things. So that one of these sagacious philosophers has only to turn his sapient eye on any subject whatever, and howeve recondite and profound, he sees with the slightest

glance what is reasonable about it, and what is absurd—and can settle it instantly with oracular certainty.

Others regard reason as a sort of moral instinct, which decides by feeling instead of eyesight, and exercises on all points an unerring discrimination.

And as to the import of the term reasonable, that is sometimes what accords with the preconceived opinions of men, with what it seems to them most suitable and proper that God should do—and sometimes it is that which corresponds with their wishes, and sits pleasantly on their feelings. Now when such vague and false conceptions are formed of the attributes and capacities of reason, in the utter absence of all correct and definite standards of comparison, and that outer darkness to which presumptuous men push their speculations where God reigns alone and asks no counsel, and gives no account of his matters, is it wonderful that men become bewildered, confounded, wearied, discouraged, and at length sceptical from the supposed impossibility of knowing any thing? When they explore the bible and analyze the conduct of God with such false conceptions, it is not wonderful that what they meet with does not correspond with their preconceived opinions, or with their wishes, or with their feelings, and that they should be offended, and perplexed, and in despondency and vexation give up the knowledge

of the truth, as something which cannot be obtained.

The liberty which some nominal christians have taken with the inspiration and exposition of the bible, has tended powerfully to undermine their own and the public confidence in the book.

Having decided by *reason* what the bible *ought* to mean, they have attempted to make its stubborn dialect conform, and to stop its mouth where it would speak amiss, or by the rack to compel it to prophesy deceits. And where all this will not avail, to lop off with the knife the incorrigible passages.

But by the time this torturing, pruning process is ended, there is little left which the experimenter himself believes; and but little confidence in that which he affects to believe. When it has been once discovered that the Old Testament is obsolete, and filled with unworthy conceptions of God and dangerous errors; that certain portions of the New Testament are spurious, and others mistranslated; that many of the epistles are of doubtful authority, and none of them so guarded by inspiration as to exclude false reasoning, allegorizings, and mysticism, and accommodations to the errors and prejudices of the age; that even the Gospels are not a revelation, but merely a history of one, which uninspired men wrote down as well as they could remember, but with less ability than Cicero or Socrates would have done it, they are prepared for the

conclusion, that there is no revelation, and that reason is man's only guide; that there is *some truth* in the bible which was once revealed, which lies somewhere amid the rubbish of ages, and the confusion of mistake; but what it is, and where it is, reason must decide, taking up the particles of truth by its own attraction, as the magnet extracts iron from the sand. No other book could sustain its character for truth under such treatment—no other book ever written by men of common sense, was ever regarded as being thus incapable of definite exposition. Such uncertainty thrown upon human legislation, would destroy utterly the power of civil governments. Were it announced from the bar and the bench, that the obvious import of the statute book is not the true import, that more than half of it is obsolete and filled with false principles of law, that in the best parts, some enactments are interpolations and others borrowed from dead languages mistranslated; that none of them are the laws of the state, but the mere *history* of laws, passed ages ago, which the bystanders *heard* enacted, and wrote down for our use according to the best of their recollection; with fewer means for accuracy than the reporters of parliamentary or congressional debates; that they have sent down to us many wise and some foolish laws, which need to be modified in accommodation to the altered state of society; and that in discriminating between what is obsolete, and interpolated, and misremembered and mistranslated, and what is

genuine and obligatory, the bench, and the jury, and the people must judge for themselves—following the dictates of their own reason,—could the statute book, with no more definiteness and authority defend us against the innovations of the anti-social system? And can the bible, as Heaven's law book, be treated thus and continue to be "the law of the Lord, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord, which is sure, making wise the simple," "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation?" Can such loose and low opinions of the bible, be thrown out upon the community, and not subtract from the reverence and the confidence, which is indispensable, to render it the efficient legislation of Heaven? The results of this practice have corresponded with its tendencies. In Germany, it has brought commentator and reader, to the frank unqualified denial of the inspiration of the bible; and in this country, the same treatment of the bible has already produced, and is producing the same results.

Another occasion of scepticism, is the confounding of the physical and moral power of God.

Physical omnipotence is the capacity of God to do whatever is, in the nature of things, possible to be done by direct power.

Moral omnipotence is the capacity of God to do by laws and moral influence, whatever is consistent with the nature of mind, of free agency, accountability, and moral government.

He did not so make the Solar System, as that its government, by the ten commandments, should be a possible thing, or so constitute the mind as that choice and accountability should by any possibility be the result of a direct irresistible omnipotence. But multitudes confound this distinction, and apply the attributes of physical omnipotence to the government of mind, and thus drawing inferences against the bible, attempt to explain away its unbending orthodoxy. Why, they say, if faith is necessary, does not God make men believe? Is he not Omnipotent? What need was there for an atonement? Could not God have held the heart of the universe steady even though he had sanctified and pardoned the guilty? Is he not Almighty? Does he not desire the salvation of all, and work all things after the counsel of his own will? Why then will not all men be saved? Who can believe that he will punish when his power enables him just as consistently to save? They overlook the fact, that simple power, such as can wield the material universe, must act in the government of mind by laws, and motives, and moral influence, with reference to the formation and continuance of character, and free agency, and accountability; and that to assert that God can govern mind directly, as he governs matter, is to beg the question, and deny the distinction between material and moral government, and contradict the bible, which declares that God, by the law could not,

and only through the atonement could be just and the justifier of him that believeth.

Another cause of scepticism is found in mental dissipation.

There are multitudes who think incessantly, but never make the effort to methodize and digest their thoughts. They read all sorts of books, engage in all sorts of discussions, hear all sorts of preachers, vainly hoping that in some favored moment, truth personified will stand before them. But as she does not appear, they let the heterogeneous mass float in upon and oppress the mind, as undigested aliment does the stomach—till fumes and debility ensue. No wonder they cannot believe any thing. The animal who could not eat between two equal attractions of appetite, and at length gorged himself by eating every thing within his reach, would not be in a more pitiable condition.

The union of church and state in Protestant nations has been a fruitful cause of scepticism.

It was the result of an order of things which the reformers could not change; which, though it sometimes aided, hindered more than it helped the cause of pure religion, while to religious liberty it gave little besides the name.

It was this unhallowed alliance with the state which withdrew the eye and the heart from the protection of heaven, to rely on an arm of flesh, and from the doctrines of heaven to the commandments of men, and which filled up the church with professors by subscriptions to

creeds and conformity to ceremonies, without the evangelical qualifications of repentance tow ards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this bad alliance the sabbath was profaned, and a lax morality prevailed within her sacred inclosures, and discipline was neglected, and crimes tolerated, in high places and in low; while the right of presentation to the ministry, by the king and nobility, rendered the ministry a sinecure, and filled it, not unfrequently, with ignorant, vicious, and heretical men.

This preposterous exhibition of religion in alliance with the world, obscured her glory, destroyed her purity, and broke her power, and emancipated men from the dominion of christianity to fall back upon scepticism and infidelity.

In this country we have indeed no union of church and state; and yet we have not escaped entirely the amalgamation of the church and the world. Just in proportion as, on principles of superstition, or formality, or policy, men without holiness are recognized as members of the church of Christ, the same results will follow: a lax observance of the sabbath, a loose morality and formal worship, antinomian fatality or Arminian laxity of doctrine, both of which alike grieve the spirit and abandon man to his own heart's lust. It was this amalgamation of the church with the world in New-England, by a profession without evidence of piety, which stopped for seventy years, those

revivals with which the colonies commenced, and which began again only with the restoration of the scriptural tenure of membership, by a credible profession of holiness.

It was this amalgamation which brought unconverted men into the ministry and introduced, first, a lax Calvinisn; and then, Arminianism; and then, Arianism; and after that, Socinianism; till at length scepticism became the predominant cast of those, who were not professedly evangelical.

The attempt making by some to annihilate the distinction of church and congregation among nominal christians and to comprehend in one charitable fellowship entire towns, parishes, or congregations, is one of the most efficient methods which could be devised for putting out the light and paralyzing the power of the gospel, and filling the land with sceptics and infidels.

The way to prevent infidelity is not to unspiritualize Christianity, and make it simply a religion of forms and movable terms, so accommodating that unholy men shall find neither reproof nor repellency; not so to bring down the church and its doctrines and discipline, that infidels may find themselves well qualified and acceptable brethren, without any change of sentiment or practice.

Men of sense despise such temporizing policy. They know that religion is either a matter of vast magnitude or nothing; and since these

teachers reduce it so nearly to the capacity of a cypher, they choose to go for the whole, and regard it all as a fable.

If you search the congregations of the whole nation, you will find scepticism to predominate most in those places where the claims and sanctions of the gospel have been brought down the lowest, and the difference between christian and infidel so narrowed down, as that in the conjunction, it would be difficult to decide whether christianity had been converted to infidelity, or infidelity to christianity.

Not a few are rendered sceptical by the protracted habit of believing the truth without obeying it.

The snares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things spring up, and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. In this condition of unproductive hearing, while the world rises in relative estimation, the concerns of eternity recede and disappear: the result is a growing insensibility of mind to evidence. The being of God, and the inspiration of the bible, and the realities of the eternal state, though certified by evidence, more luminous and powerful than ever was concentrated on any other subject, assume the position of believed, but unrealized truths—like those distant orbs of heaven whose light, as yet, has not reached the earth. The man has a respect for religion, and its institutions; and under the power of conscience, there is at times solemnity, and impression, and many

good wishes, and half-formed resolutions, and earnest desires, and sad regrets, and many fears and many hopes of being and doing better; but this at length becomes an irksome state. The wane of life, and the approaching shades of evening, warn the subject that his days are almost numbered, and eternity is near.

He would prefer becoming a christian by regeneration, if he thought he could; but begins to fear that he never shall,—wishes there might be some other way—hopes there may be, and begins to look around with exploring eye, to see if there is not. And immediately, as eagles gather about the slain, temptations gather about the ruined man, and volunteer their aid.

And now the truth, heard before with patience, begins to become irksome and painful, and he hears, with the reaction of excited sensibility. He believes, to be sure; but then, the doctrines are preached too much, or with too much terror, or too much earnestness, or too much severity, or personality of reference. He wishes that ministers would preach the relative duties more, and the doctrines less. Still, it is slowly that education, and conscience, and habit let go. In times of peril, and of quickened attention to religion, conscience awakes, and drives out the intrusions of doubt, and shakes his soul with salutary fear. He trembles, relents, and is almost persuaded to become a christian; but the elastic cord which binds him only yields to the pressure, but does not break; and when the momentary effort has

passed by, returns to its massy strength. And now the alternative becomes imperious of meeting or disbelieving the terrors of the future state; and finally he determines if possible to disbelieve. A large proportion of the virulent opponents of evangelical doctrine and the bible, are men who were once nominal believers, and had, at some period of their life, been seriously awakened about the concerns of their souls, until despondency, and fear, and guilt made them sceptics.

Undefined and unworthy conceptions of experimental religion, as associated with the weaknesses and extravagances of indiscreet and fanatical good men, are the occasions of uncertainty and doubt to many minds.

I do not regard as fanaticism, a sudden and deep sense of guilt and danger, falling upon many minds at the same time, and followed speedily with filial sorrow for sin, and affectionate reliance on the Saviour, and a life subsequently consecrated to his service. I have reference to great excitement, where there is little knowledge; to excessive, unregulated, tumultuous feeling—superseding discretion, and enlisting the animal susceptibilities, and nervous excitement, and spiritual pride—regardless alike of scriptural restraint, and the decorum of civilized, social intercourse. When such whirlwinds of wildfire break out among wood, and hay, and stubble, it is called by some a revival of religion; but though there should be some religion amid the vast disorder, I call it fanaticism, and the real religion

of it, like a few kernals of wheat amid mountains of chaff, set on fire and blown about by furious winds. It is owing to such excesses, that lasting associations of odium are attached to revivals, where no such exhibitions are witnessed—and where the effects are pure, and undefiled religion.

Another cause of scepticism is found in dissolute habits.

The process is short and obvious. The conflict between the man's practice and his conscience is too severe to be permanently endured. One or the other must conform, or there can be no peace. To relinquish his guilty pleasures and sinful ways, he is not prepared. These he will not give up, and therefore his only alternative is, to deceive himself, and still his conscience by false testimony.

This commonly is attempted at first, by an endeavor so to expound the bible, as that it shall speak peace to the wicked. But it is formed of such unbending materials, that though bent out of the way, like the elastic bow, it flies back the moment the constraining force relaxes. If wrested, it requires too much watching, and holding wrong, to consist with convenience and comfort; for though with great effort it may be stretched upon the rack, and compelled to prophesy peace to the wicked, no sooner are the engines of torture relaxed, than it thunders out again, "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The bible, therefore, to a vicious man, is a most terrific

book; with all he can do, and with all the help he can obtain to explain it away, it keeps him in constant alarm: like the fires of a volcano, it burns fiercely beneath his feet, and keeps up a dreadful sound in his ears, and shakes his soul with reiterated and unsubdued alarms—until in weariness, and vexation, and desperation, he turns furiously, and rushes, vi et armis, upon his unrelenting tormentor. And now he stands erect, and sets his mouth against the heavens, and his foot on all which is pure and holy; and calls it emancipation, and the triumph of reason over education, and superstition, and priestcraft.

Before the epidemic of infidelity passed over our land, nearly all the vicious were condemned to do penance for their crimes, by a nominal belief in christianity, and the retributions of a future state; but since that event, nearly every man and woman of dissolute habits have secretly or openly sent in their renunciation of the bible, and their adhesion to the sceptical cast. One illustration of this kind may stand for thousands. A youth, religiously educated, comes in quest of employment from the country, to one of our great cities. His principles are unperverted, his breath is pure, his morals are uncorrupt, his conscience is tender, and all his habits are good. But he is a stranger; and in his vacant moments, far from parents and friends, is solitary; he falls at length into the society of amiable, polite, and courteous young men; but, alas! adepts in the wiles of temptation, and the practices of evil, they spread the

snare for his feet, and dig the pit for his downfall. At first, he is shocked and recoils; and they, nothing daunted, renew their assiduities, and let fall upon his ear their sympathy for his faintness of heart and superstitious fears. Their sophistry and cavils distil as dew upon him, and their sarcasm eateth as doth a canker. By little and little his heart receives the shock with less repellency; and as he sees that they eat and do not die, and hears them boasting of their liberty, the young unhallowed desire begins to rise in his bosom, and as conscience falters, and his fears subside, in evil hour he consents to the enticement, and is undone. Still, for a season, a wounded conscience pains him, and he passes sleepless nights and days of wo. "O that I had never left the abodes of purity and come to this guilty city!—O that I had rejected and burst away, when I faltered and was almost persuaded to do so! O my mother!—what wouldst thou say didst thou know what thy son is doing? O my sister! didst thou see what thy brother has become, how would thy pure heart bleed!"

But the net is upon him, and he struggles only to draw closer the toils about him. The stream is rolling on with a broader, deeper tide, which he resists with a feebler arm—till, in desperation, resistance ceases, and he goes downward in the full career of augmenting crime. At length his guilty pleasures surpass his income, and to meet the deficiency, he borrows of his employer. Yes, he borrows—without leave, indeed—but to repay;

and borrows again, and repeats the loan, till repayment becomes impossible—and at length detection and shame burst upon him. And now his character is gone, his prospects in life are blasted, and he becomes misanthropic and desperate. He will not reform, and he cannot endure the hell which the truth believed kindles in his bosom, and resolves to bury his wretchedness in the ruins of his faith. He calls to his aid Hume, and Paine, and Volney, and Voltaire, and Owen, and Wright, and becomes a sceptic; and between the gambling table and the brothel, and the midnight enterprises of the anti-social band, and the jail, he spends his days—till at length the hand of justice overtakes him, and he dies in a halter.

I will only add, that implicit confidence in great and learned men, who have been unbelievers, is a frequent cause of scepticism.

For though there is no class of men who boast more of free and independent thought, than sceptics, there are in fact few men who think less, or rely with a more tame, implicit, unthinking confidence on the opinion of others. They assume that these great men have examined the subject thoroughly, and candidly, on both sides, and that where such minds have been unable to find competent evidence to rest their faith upon, it must be that there is none. But all these premises, so important to the conclusion, are assumed without evidence, and falsely. The instance is probably yet to be found, of a sceptic, who had soberly and carefully, and candidly examined both sides; who had

studied the history, and design, and evidence, and exposition of the bible. Many who have undertaken only to read it, to find armor against it, have been cured of their scepticism; but I do not believe a well authenticated instance can be found of a sceptic who was a good biblical scholar, and who studied thoroughly the bible and its evidences, and remained a sceptic. But if it were so, it would be nothing to be relied on, while a hundred to one of great mind and learning, read and are convinced. Great minds have also great and evil hearts, powerful passions, great vices of life, and great aversion to the truth, and violent prejudices against it, and an indomitable pride, revolting against becoming little children, that they may enter the kingdom of God. The children of our sabbath schools, of twelve years of age, are probably much better acquainted with the history, and doctrines, and evidences of the bible than the ablest deists, who have poured forth torrents of scorn and invective against it. Nothing therefore is more weak, and foolish, and perilous than the scepticism which is inspired by confidence in perverted talent, and unapplied knowledge, and the decisions of ignorance, and prejudice, and hatred against the word of God.

In respect to the remedy for scepticism, there are two courses. One is the concentration of the mind upon admitted truths with reference to the immediate exercise of right affections.

The knowledge requisite to the exercise of the affections, is far short of that which is demanded

to settle all the difficulties and remove all the doubts of a speculating mind; and correct affections in view of truth are practicable, while many clouds hang over particular departments of the great subject. A man may understand and approve the vital parts of the constitution of the United States, long before he has studied and made up his mind on every particular, and his patriotic approbation of what he does understand will aid him in the study and comprehension of the rest. In like manner when the heart shall render to God the homage of love and confidence, gratitude and obedience, in view of such exhibitions of his character, and word and ways, as are comprehended and entitled to affectionate confidence, three-fourths of all the speculative difficulties will pass away as the mists recede before the rising sun, and those which linger will be soon adjusted.

To accomplish this result, however, a rigid inhibition must be laid upon the habit of speculation. For the present it must be stopped, and the whole soul be turned from the effort at knowing every thing to the effort at doing the will of God, which is known; and to this end, the bible should be devoutly read, with a simple reference to the understanding and obeying the claims of God upon the heart. Let a careful non-intercourse be maintained with all associates who would divert your mind, and bring around you the society of intelligent christian friends

and give yourself, at stated times daily, to retirement, the reading of the Scriptures and fervent prayer for guidance and illumination. Attend statedly also upon the public worship of God, and be careful to avoid every practice which would do violence to your conscience, and to preserve unbroken and with increasing vigor all your serious mental associations; and daily and often as the knowledge of duty breaks in upon your mind, do it. Give to God the affections of your soul, and consecrate yourself to his service. Exercise ingenuous sorrow for your sins, and rely affectionately upon the Saviour.

The chief difficulty you will have to encounter will be the mental effort to begin, and the difficulty and irksomeness of a first attempt to fix your thoughts upon an unwelcome and long neglected subject. It is this reluctance of the mind to give itself immediately to the subject, and the faintness of heart incident to the early stages of effort, upon which temptation concentrates its power to produce indefinite procrastination and doubt. But decision will soon be followed with augmented power of resolved purpose, and diminished resistance, and with the increased influence of the Spirit, till by the divine blessing you come to a calm, intelligent, delightful consecration of all your powers, to Him who loved you and gave himself to die for your sins.

The course here recommended is not a mere

theory, but a practical prescription, often repeated, and to my knowledge never without auspicious results. I have known young men of literary distinction and sceptical habits, who obtained in this way quickly permanent satisfaction, which years of discussion and mental scrutiny had failed to bestow: and veterans I have known in sceptical debate, who, by a devout communion with their own hearts and the bible, have come into the possession of abiding confidence and tranquillity of mind. These results are doubtless an illustration of the promise:—if any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, and of what is meant by becoming a little child that we may enter the kingdom of God.

The man who will not obey the gospel till he can comprehend every thing which appertains to the vast system, will probably never obey it; while he whose heart follows, with equal steps the movements of his understanding will find his path shining more and more to the perfect day.

There are, however, some minds of such a temperament and of such inflexible habits, as may render the total inhibition of speculation extremely difficult. In such a case, while I would still urgently recommend the preceding course in respect to the devout discipline of the heart, by reading and prayer, and efforts to feel right, there would seem to be a necessity of referring the mind also to the elementary

principles of accountability and moral government. These are the pillars of the temple, without which, it is but a heap of splendid ruins; and no one can be conversant with sceptical minds and not perceive their deficiency in elementary knowledge, and exact definitions. They always include some positions at variance with the principles of moral government, and leave out principles, which are indispensable to a just conception of the subject, and like missing a figure in an arithmetical process, it vitiates the result. But the mistake having been made, and persisted in, and incorporated in every train of thought, is not likely to be detected by the subject alone. The aid of some intelligent friend is needed, who, in a free conversation, may point out the assumptions, and supply the deficiencies, and put the definitions and reasonings in order; and they will move on unbiassed, to a delightful result of mental satisfaction. The elementary principles of the Christian system are, like the elements of all the great works of Heaven,—few, obvious, and of sublime simplicity; and I have never known them disencumbered and fairly presented to the minds of sceptical men, without gratifying results.

These elements of theology are comprehended in just conceptions of the decrees of God—as having for their object an intelligent universe, composed of free agents, and governed by perfect laws, perfectly administered, including the remedial system for the maintenance of law, and

the reformation and forgiveness of the guilty. They are easily understood, and when these great lights in the moral heavens arise, they dispel all darkness, and perplexity, and doubt.

The temptations to atheism, and fatalism, and to heresy and error, pass away; and reason acting upon correct premises, arrives with ease and delight at consistent and satisfying results. And the conscience does its office, and the heart feels its accountability, and obligation, and guilt; and by the power of truth and the holy spirit, the will signifies its adhesion and the affections flow forth in those channels of benevolence and complacency, which Heaven has provided for obedient minds. It is not enough, however, that the mind, long vexed and bewildered, should be guided once only through the labyrinth out of the wilderness into the open field and the light of day. The perceptions of the way might fade or the memory of old associations might return, to bias and bewilder the mind. The process should be travelled over in the society of experienced friendship many times, till the truth becomes familiar; till all its impressions remain, and its light shines serenely, and all the perverting associations of error fall as scales from the eyes and chains from the soul. And with such aid where the commitment of party or the pride of reason, or malignant animosity, or inveterate vicious habits do not prevent, the result is as sure as any thing which depends on the

unperverted action of evidence and moral influence upon the human mind.

Where no such guidance of experienced friendship can be had, no alternative remains but to add to the first prescription inflexibly adhered to, the careful study of the best elementary authors on mental philosophy and moral government, and the evidences of christianity. This though a somewhat protracted and laborious course, is the only alternative, and is justified and enforced by the immensity of the interest at stake.

Paley's Natural Theology stands unrivaled as a neat, copious, conclusive argument, of the existence and operation of the omniscient design, almighty power, and unmingled benevolence of an eternal mind. But for just and comprehensive views of the first principles of religion, the Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion, by Butler, is probably unrivaled by any product of the human mind; and studied thoroughly, and honestly, and prayerfully, by any mind of sufficient power to be entitled to speculate at all, will guide it out of darkness into light.

The motives to adopt some course to alleviate and confirm a wavering mind, are numerous and powerful.

It is a condition empty of enjoyment and attended with great mental desolation. Sceptical men are never satisfied with their speculations, and are never happy, and are often miserable. The mind was made for the acquisi-

tion of knowledge;—and that knowledge concerning which they doubt—the being, character, law, and government of God, is, of all knowledge, the most interesting in itself, and the most important. Scepticism therefore dooms the intellect to sterility and famine, and the heart to vacancy, and the soul to suspense, on this most important subject.

It is also an entirely gratuitous deprivation of good, and endurance of evil.

The reiterated complaint, that there are so many opinions on the subject that nothing can be known, is as unfounded as it is pusillanimous. Were opinions the only source of knowledge, and to be weighed by the pound, or to be counted by the dozen, to decide by the suffrage of number what is true, the conclusion might be well founded; but facts and evidence are the material of knowledge, and the elementary truths of revelation are just as plain, and their results just as easily attained, and just as satisfactory and certain, as on any other subject. On the same condition that knowledge can be obtained in natural philosophy, it can be obtained in theology. Honest, persevering application is the universal condition of knowledge in every department of the kingdom of God; and the theological department is just as accessible to study, and just as certainly rewards industry, as any other. At the entrance it is written, "If thou shalt incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thy heart to understanding; if thou criest after knowledge, and

liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."*

By far the greatest portion of intelligent minds who have candidly and thoroughly investigated, have escaped indecision and doubt, and multitudes by the same means have emerged from darkness, and come into the possession of a settled confidence. It were a libel on heaven, to suppose that it has thrown wide open all the avenues of natural knowledge and lit up lamps about them, and shrouded with impenetrable darkness the threshold of moral government—the gateway of eternity. God is not the author of scepticism. He has not thrust out orbs of intelligence to roll about him in blackness of darkness. It is his desire to manifest himself to the minds which he has made, by pouring out floods of light around him, through the medium of his works and his word; and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err.

To every sceptical man, I would say then in conclusion,—the subjects upon which your mind wavers are too important to be permitted to hang in doubt. You cannot prove that there is no God, or that the soul is not immortal, and accountable, and depraved, needing an atonement and sanctification, to escape everlasting ruin and obtain eternal life. But before you reject the subject, you ought to be well ascertained that the in-

* Prov. ii. 2, 3, 4, 5.

spiration of the bible and its representations of human character and the future state are not true. Were your titles to your earthly estate doubtful, that fact would wake up all your energies to put the matter out of doubt. If you had as much evidence in the night that your house is on fire, as you have that you are a sinner and that God will by no means clear the guilty, would you cry peace and sleep on because you did not know to a certainty that it was your house, which was burning? Would you pass a road beset probably with robbers, because you had some doubts whether they would be there or not? If you had as much evidence of poison in your cup as you have that christianity is true and scepticism ruinous, would you drink because you did not certainly know that there was death in it? It is not enough that you do not know the bible to be true. You ought to know it to be false, before you reject it; seeing if it is false, nothing is lost, and all is lost, if it be true, and you reject it.

LECTURE III.

POLITICAL ATHEISM.

PSALM, XIV. 1.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD.

Moral Atheism is the aversion of the heart to God and his government. It implies no impotency of intellect; but its perversion, by the obliquity of the heart. It is not the understanding which revolts against evidence; but the heart which revolts against holiness and moral obligation. The language of the heart consists in feeling; and to say in the heart, "no God," is to wish there were none. This aversion to the existence of God, springs however, from no disinterested malignity to his being, provided it implied no law, accountability, guilt, and danger.

It is against God as a moral governor, reigning over men by a law which is holy, and just, and good—that the heart of the fool makes insurrection. Its language is,—no accountability—no fear—no restraint—no self-denial—no change of heart and

life, to escape perdition—and no reward or punishment in a future state according to deeds.

Speculative Atheism is the actual belief of what the heart thus desires. It is giving up the understanding to strong delusion, to believe a lie.

The first aberration of alienated mind, was manifested in licentiousness and violence; the second in idolatry—the worship by visible symbols of local divinities inhabiting the several departments of nature. The increase of philosophy united these scattered energies into one almighty mind, from which inferior minds were emanations, like sparks from heavenly bodies, to be in due time absorbed again. Gradually however, as sense prevailed, and the darkness deepened, the intelligence of voluntary action of mind went out, and left only an unthinking, all-pervading energy—the soul of the world, and the primum mobile of all motion in the universe, according to the attributes and laws of self-existent and eternal nature.

This is Pantheism, which makes the world God, and God the world. It is the atheism which was in France, the offspring of perverted Christianity; and it is substantially the form which the infidelity of this country has assumed—many sceptics, but few deists. Most who doubt are as much unsettled concerning the being of a God, immortality of the soul and a future state, as about the bible. It is denominated political atheism, because in France and here its theories extend to the modification of the religious, civil, and social state of man—contemplating nothing less than the abolition of marriage and the family

state, separate property, civil government, and all sense of accountability, and all religious worship—an effort to turn the world up side down, and empty it of every institution, thought, feeling and action which has emanated from Christianity, to join mankind solely under the auspices of atheism.

That such associations exist and are acting in correspondence, and are extending themselves through the country, is a matter of notoriety. That they can no longer, with safety, be despised, or permitted to move on without some effort to apprise the community of their character and designs, is equally certain; for though no doubt public sentiment, when brought to act upon them, will render them harmless, it is no less true that the reality and nature of these associations must be understood, that this great corrector may act upon them.

It will be the object therefore, of this discourse, to illustrate the doctrines, the follies, and dangers, of Political Atheism.

The creed inscribed on the black flag around which these men have rallied, is short and dreadful. It is raised high, and floats on the breeze, proclaiming in capitals, to every eye—That THERE IS NO GOD—NO RESURRECTION—NO FUTURE STATE—NO FREE AGENCY—NO ACCOUNTABILITY—NO VIRTUE—NO SIN—NO DEVIL—NO HEAVEN—NO HELL—AND THAT DEATH IS AN ETERNAL SLEEP. That man is a thinking, reasoning machine, governed mechanically, according to the laws of animated matter. That evidence governs the understanding, and motives the will, on the same principle that percussion moves the pebble,

and weights turn the scales, and that all events are made certain by a material, mechanical necessity. There is nothing in the universe but matter, is the one article of the atheist's creed.

The political part of this creed is,—That all coercive government by law is a contravention of liberty, and arbitrary and unjust:—That separate property is but a limb of the feudal system, and an anti-republican monopoly:—That marriage is an unreasonable restraint on liberty, and ought to be abolished; and the family to be disbanded, as the citadel of selfishness and separate property, and all those aristocratic monopolies for the subversion of liberty, the perpetuity of priest-craft, and the vile union of church and state:—That the fear of God, is a delusion; conscience, superstition; natural affection, the prejudice of education; chastity, pusillanimous; and incontinence, magnanimous.

To those who are not initiated in these mysteries, it may be a matter of terrific curiosity to understand how all this is to be accomplished. An outline only can be given.

The belief in God's existence is to be obliterated—by exposing the sophistry that universal design is evidence of an intelligent designer, and accounting for the existence of things by the agency of almighty chance. The Bible is to be driven out of circulation, by the detection and exposure of its imposture, absurdity, and pernicious influence. The Sabbath is to be obliterated, as a waste of time, and its place supplied by occasional holidays for amusement and pleasure. Marriage is to be hooted out of society

as a contemptible usurpation of liberty, while the entire race of men, free as other animals, wander over the great common field, and hold promiscuous intercourse, and eat, and drink, and propagate, and die. The property of the world is to become a common stock, to which each is to contribute, by his labor, and from which he is to receive his rations of food and raiment in due season. The progeny of these emancipated animals, whose existence they may choose to permit, is to be educated at the public expense, and legislators, instead of enacting laws for the government of men, are to be occupied in administering those circumstances, whose mechanical power in education, shall effectuate his perfection, and introduce the atheistical political millennium. In the application of this nurture and admonition all are to be made equal in education, and continued equal in honor and property, that there may be no superiority to occasion pride, and no inferiority to occasion envy, but one great plain, without protuberance or indentation, over which the whole team, equally yoked, may move on to annihilation in blessed equanimity.

This hopeful change in human affairs is to be accomplished by the indefatigable and systematic effort of the initiated, to revolutionize public sentiment, until it shall speak at the polls and in the halls of legislation, and vote out of the world, God, and the Bible, and the Sabbath and public worship, and the gospel ministry, and marriage, and the family, and all inequality of knowledge and honor and profit, and all government but the government of circum-

stances, to make way for the millennium of reason and nature, in which man may live without God, and obey the flesh without shame, and die without fear.

In this crusade against Christianity and heaven, the press is to be deeply enlisted; and by periodicals, and newspapers, and tracts, and caricature prints, every where disseminated, is to dispel the existing darkness, pour daylight on the human mind, and innoculate the people with the virus of indomitable liberty, to whose ferocious heart and fiery eye, religious and civil liberty, and inequality of property, the restraints of law, and virtue itself, shall be regarded as usurpation and treason, and the pavements, which in Europe are torn up to batter down despotism, shall here be turned against the temples of God and the laws of the land. As a powerful auxiliary in this mark of universal emancipation, woman is to be enlisted—woman, unperverted, the pattern of whatsoever things are pure and lovely, but herself corrupted, a paragon of deformity, a demon in human form.

But as Mahomet, when deception moved him on to power, shortened the process of conversion by force, so these friends of universal liberty, when power shall second inclination, intend and now threaten to put out the sun of righteousness and compel us to float through life in the stream of licentious animalism. Upon both parts of this system, its falsehood and its folly, I must be permitted to make a few observations.

Under the first head, I have the following remarks to offer:—

1. It is a thing eminently to be desired, that there should be a supreme benevolent intelligence, who is the Creator and moral Governor of the universe, whose subjects and kingdom shall endure forever.

The want of some intellect above our own, and of social affections more copious and pure than man can bestow, and of guidance and protection, and the intercourse of obedience and reward, and grateful affection, is what the whole nature of man indicates, and his whole soul pants after. We feel our littleness in presence of the majestic elements of nature, and our weakness compared with their power, and our loneliness in the vast universe, unenlighted, unguided and unblessed by any intelligence superior to our own. We behold the flight of time, the passing fashion of the world, and the gulf of annihilation curtained with the darkness of an eternal night. At the side of this dark vortex which covers with deep oblivion the past, and impenetrable darkness the future, nature shudders and draws back, and the soul, with sinking heart, looks mournfully around upon this fair creation, and up to these beautiful heavens, and in plaintive accents demands: Is there, then, no deliverance from this falling-back into nothing? Must this conscious being cease?—this reasoning, thinking power,—and stop its action, and these warm affections, their delightful movements? Must this eye close in an endless night, and this heart fall back upon everlasting insensibility?——O, thou cloudless sun, and ye far distant stars, in all your journeyings

m light, have ye discovered no blessed intelligence who called you into being, lit up your fires, marked your orbits, wheels you in your courses; around whom ye roll, and whose praises ye silently celebrate? Are ye empty worlds and desolate, the sport of chance; or like our sad earth, are ye peopled with inhabitants, waked up to a brief existence, and hurried reluctantly, from an almost untasted being back to nothing? O that there were a God, who made you, greater than ye all, whose being in yours we might see, whose intelligence we might admire, whose will we might obey, and whose goodness we might adore!—Such except, where guilt seeks annihilation as the choice of evils, is the unperverted, universal longing after God and immortality.

2. There is no evidence that there is not a self-existent eternal mind, who is the creator and providential and moral governor of the universe. Something it is admitted must have been eternal—And it may as well be self-existent mind as self-existent matter. It is as easy to conceive of a mind self-existent and eternal, which shall systematize the universe, as of a self-existent eternal systematized material system. That which exists without beginning and without cause, cannot be reasoned about, and may be one thing, as well as another. It may as well be believed that there is a self-existent voluntary mind, as that there is a self-existent organized universe.

3. The evidence of the existence of a self-existent mind is as great as it would be if what we behold were in fact the product and evidence of such an

existence. The only evidence of invisible intelligent mind is the manifestation of design; and the only evidence of design is the adaptation of means to ends, in such a manner as cannot be accounted for by accident, without the absurdity of supposing effects without a cause.

But now if there were a God who spread abroad these heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and balanced the solar system, and sent his handy workmanship from its stupendous developement, in guiding great events down through all the gradations and departments of nature, to the confines of the minuteness of nothing, he could not, by the adaptation of means to ends, more clearly or fully declare his eternal power and godhead. Every page is covered and crowded with plans and their execution. If design then is evidence of a designer—we might exclaim whither shall we go from thy presence?

4. The supposition that all these indications of design are the results of the unthinking undesigning energies of nature, involves the contradiction of supposing an endless series of effects without a cause; for though nature might be supposed to move without thought, uniform and all-pervading design is a kind of movement to be accounted for only from mind. You might as well account for the existence of change without cause, as for uniform and universal design without mind. Design without intelligence is therefore an effect without a cause; and therefore a universal conatus of nature cannot be the cause of the order, and beauty, and design which meet the eye on every page of nature's book.

5. There are no facts which go to prove the existence of design without a designer.

The instinct of the bee does indeed produce her mathematically constructed dwelling; but that instinct itself demands or it indicates an intelligent cause: for no one will suppose that the bee has studied mathematical figures, or that unguided by mind, they would grow up under her instinctive industry.

The affinities of matter, which unite particles in mathematical forms, is admitted to indicate design; but as matter itself does not think, it indicates the arrangement of a mind not its own.

6. The validity of design, as evidence of an intelligent designer, is universally admitted in respect to man.

It is admitted that man is a rational, intelligent, voluntary being acting by design. But the only evidence of it is contained in his works. Blot out evidence of design and you throw over mind the veil of idiocy. The evidence of an intelligent mind in man, contained in the evidence of design in his works, is conclusive.

No one has hardihood to examine cities, manufactories, farms, turnpikes, steamboats, railroads, bookstores, fleets and armies, and deny to man the visitations of reason. But the only difference in the argument, as applied to men and to God, is the extent and complication of a universal design, above the narrow limits of human intellect.

We only add that the evidence of the being of a supreme intelligent mind, from universal design, is

not the result of multiplied probabilities; but is a strict demonstration of the being of God.

That no effect can exist without a cause, is a self-evident proposition. That design, produced by undesigning causes, is an effect without a cause, is equally self-evident; and that universal design indicates a universal designer as clearly as human design indicates a limited designer; and that the universal designer, whose plans pervade the universe, is the self-existent, eternal, almighty mind, who moves and governs all.

The folly of Political Atheism consists in the reversing of all this reasoning—In teaching that effects may exist without a cause, and universal design without a designer. The existence of a watch, proves the existence of an intelligent mind; but the mechanism of the universe proves nothing.

It happened unexplained, and came without cause, from chaos, into order and beauty. The conjectures concerning the progress of this great accident, are various. One only can be given; but this, though short, is full of wonders.

Sometime ago, after chaos and old night had reigned undisturbed from eternity, and matter had fermented, and tossed, and rolled into almost infinite forms, it happened to fall, for the first time, into just those relations which constituted the volcanic power; when, in a moment, an explosion took place, loud as ten thousand thunders, which sent out innumerable suns, flying in fusion through space, streaming athwart the darkness their baleful light, till they stopped and

became fixed stars in the glorious firmament above. But they carried in their bosom the sad accidents which gave them birth; and new throes ensued, sending out around them comets, and planets, and satellites, all moving in elliptic orbits, with arithmetical accuracy, so that for ages past, and for ages to come, the almanac discloses their movements with as exact accuracy as the clock tells of time. What chance it was which checked their flight, and by a resolution of force, wheeled them round in their elliptic career—or why, the centripetal power exhausted, they did not fall back, with accelerated momentum, into the horrible crater whence they sprung—or where that mass may be, which could furnish matter, of which to make the universe, and sustain the reaction of sending it out; that mighty cannon, whose shot are suns, and worlds; our philosophers have not yet discovered. But so it happened—they were exploded, and as yet they have not fallen back.

And now, leaving the suns, and orbs, and other systems, we decend to trace the history of our own mother earth, whom we meet reeking from her recent explosion, her waves of fire tossing and raging; which as they cooled, crusted and stood upright as an heap, and became the perpetual hills and everlasting mountains. The weightier masses sunk downward, towards the centre, with lighter and lighter deposits above, leaving the crust when pulverized, for fallow ground and harvests.

As yet, however, the earth was without form

and void, and a hideous nakedness spread over its late burning surface. When, strange to tell, grass, and trees, sprang up and began to ornament the hills and carpet the valleys—and hard on the footsteps of this wonder, trod another; the waters teemed with organic life, which lashed with oar the pliant wave, and sported in the deep;—and suddenly the hills sent down to the valleys, and the valleys sent back to the hills, the bleating of flocks and herds; while the groves sent forth the joyous notes of birds and insects. All these, in grand concert, burst out upon the silence of nature, and all, as they needed, waited on almighty chance, who gave them their meat in due season.

The organization of this delighted choir, was such as demanded respiration, and the flowing of a warm blood, for which an elastic atmosphere was needed; and it happened, as the earth cooled and consolidated, that several gases escaped from confinement, so exactly of the same specific gravity, and blessed with such social and friendly dispositions, that they agreed to exist in partnership, and to surround the earth, and most benevolently to volunteer their aid for respiration. Each, alone, deadly to life, but united, its sustaining power.

This world of breathing animation, rose up with optics—camera obscura in the head, to pencil inside the images of objects without. When, lo, the orb of day, when he fled from his heated prison, forgot not in his panic to take with him stores of light, manufactured for immediate use, which ever since,

he has been pouring out unexhausted, in marvellous abundance. Light, so dexterously compounded of seven colors, as to be colorless, and well adapted to the purposes of vision.

But amid this exuberance of animated being, there was not a man to till the ground or admire the beauties of nature. Behold then another wonder—the fortuitous concourse of atoms, before the earth so cooled as to stop fermentation, produced a human skeleton; around which, with kind affinity, came the sinews and the muscles, and took their place. The lungs for breathing, and the arteries and veins to carry around the vital fluid, offered their aid, and were accepted. The nervous system—semi-animal, semi-spiritual—took its middle place, as arbitrator between the soul and the body. And to cover what otherwise had been unsightly, kind nature provided a blanket, and with kind sympathy threw its velvet covering over the whole. The eye, too, lit itself up accidentally, just at the moment it was wanted, and the socket stood excavated for its reception, and the mucus warm to make it easy, and the ligament to tie it in. The mouth, opened at the right time to prevent suffocation, and in the right place for speech, and ornamented with double rows of ivory for mastication. While nature's self, with pencil dipped in the colours of heaven, stood by, well pleased to put upon her beauteous workmanship, the finish of the sparkling eye, and rosy cheek, and ruby lip. All this, however, had constituted only a beauteous animal, but for the glorious accident of a machine for thinking, which happened to pass that way, and

consented to stop a little, and make an experiment of its powers in the upper department of this marvellous product of chance. It took its place, and swung the pendulum, and has continued to go, with surprising accuracy, though latterly, in some instances, it has seemed to be out of order and to stand in need of some little rectification in respect to its reasoning powers.

LECTURE IV.

THE

PERILS OF ATHEISM

TO

THE NATION.

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2 TIMOTHY, III. 1——7.

THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME: FOR MEN SHALL BE LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES, COVETOUS, BOASTERS, PROUD, BLASPHEMERS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNTHANKFUL, UNHOLY, WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION, TRUCE-BREAKERS, FALSE ACCUSERS, INCONTINENT, FIERCE, DESPISERS OF THOSE THAT ARE GOOD, TRAITORS, HEADY, HIGH-MINDED, LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD; HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS, BUT DENYING THE POWER THEREOF: FROM SUCH TURN AWAY. FOR OF THIS SORT ARE THEY WHICH CREEP INTO HOUSES, AND LEAD CAPTIVE SILLY WOMEN LADEN WITH SINS, LED AWAY WITH DIVERS LUSTS; EVER LEARNING, AND NEVER ABLE TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.

Such are the men whose assault upon Christianity was predicted 1800 years ago, and fulfilled by the atheistic conspiracy in France against the being and government of God. The result terrified the world, and sent the experimentalists howling out of time, or crying to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them.

Recently, the disciples of this school, imported and indigenous, having recovered from their panic,

wish to repeat their experiment upon our republican institutions. For even here the conjunction of circumstances is not right. Religion and law, those ulcers of the body politic, remain; and need to be excoriated, that healthful atheistic liberty may, in its deeds of glory, rival all the past achievements of earth and heaven. It is not my purpose to insinuate that all men who are sceptical, or who are deists, or that even all who may doubt or disbelieve the being of a God, have a distinct participation in the views and plans of political atheists; or are debased by the loathsome profligacy which characterizes generally the real adepts in this crusade against human and divine institutions. There are many whom the influence of Christianity has kept back from presumptuous sins, and who, by their past habits and existing alliances, would be withheld from an attempt to turn the world upside down; and I am not surprised at the incredulity expressed by some, as to the reality of a conspiracy in our land, against the being of God, and our civil, and social, and religious institutions.

I can only say that in Boston and New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and through New England and the middle states, their organization was as open and as well known as that of Christian churches, and no formal proof was needed. At the time these lectures were delivered, their plans were avowed in their books, and tracts, and newspapers, and inculcated in their temples of reason, discussed in their weekly meetings, and threatened as an achievement which was near, even at the

door. It was boasted that in Boston there were six hundred men on their side, ready to pledge their property for the propagation of their principles. And they actually petitioned the legislature for the charter of a college to be established under their auspices. Of this combination many were young men, whose perversion extended sorrow and alarm through the city, and created for a time that kind of febrile action which precedes contempt of law and insurrection. About this time the female apostle of atheistic liberty visited the city, and her lectures were thronged not only by men, but even by females of respectable standing. And the effects of these lectures on such listeners, was not the mere gratification of curiosity. She made her converts, and that too not among the low and the vicious alone. Females of education and refinement—females of respectable standing in society—those who had been the friends and associates of my own children—were numbered and are now among her votaries, and advocate her sentiments.

In New York the effects of such efforts were still greater. Under the imposing title of "the working men," the campaign was opened at the polls, and the Atheistic ticket came near to succeeding. About the same time, a society of philanthropists published a report on the miserable condition of abandoned females in the city, which produced a public meeting, attended by such high threats and furious denunciations, and emanations of atheistic liberty, and indications of

popular fury as threatened to supersede the protection of law, and to expose men of self-denying benevolence to personal violence.

Such also for a time was the influence of the invidious distinction between working men and others, and of the infidel trumpet-call to all the envious and vicious poor, that to my certain knowledge, serious apprehension was felt by the most judicious and sagacious men, and measures were adopted to balance these invidious associations of working men, by other associations, of correct principles, and thus to paralyze their power; and by lyceums, and libraries, and public lectures, to draw the youthful population of our cities from such pernicious influence to the paths of real science and virtue. It was as a humble effort in this countervailing movement, that these lectures were composed and delivered, in which, at the time, no one supposed that the writer did "so fight as one that beateth the air."

The unholy alliance has I doubt not felt the results of these various efforts, in the reaction of a virtuous public sentiment and has been abashed. But they are not disbanded—they have not abandoned their object. Their books, and tracts, and newspapers are still at work, and they are waiting only the recurrence of such a moral atmosphere as may favor the bursting out of the contagion with new virulence and power.

It is the testimony of the female champion of atheistic liberty, whose opportunity to feel the pulse of moral evil in the nation was unequalled,

and whose spirit-stirring eloquence was well calculated to apply the torch to the concealed train, that atheistical education must and will come either by public suffrage or by revolution.

I wish it however to be understood, that it is not so much the power of this organization, as to its numerical force, or even its influence at the polls directly, that is to be feared, as its effect in creating and extending a poisonous leaven, which gradually and silently, but really and effectually shall undermine the faith and moral principle of the nation and prepare society for dissolution;—which, in some eventful crisis may suspend the attraction of the divine government, and cut the cords which bind us together as a nation.

Their numbers, however, are not to be despised,—including those who are intelligently committed, and those whose hearts and habits of evil so sympathize with them, as to fall into and swell the channel of their river by a natural affinity and a copious flood. Were all whom their designs and a coincidence of favoring circumstances might bring under their influence drawn out, it would develop a terrific numerical and physical power. The wisdom of God is in nothing more conspicuous than in the maintenance of his cause against vast majorities often of infuriated opposition, by keeping back the bad affinities from an organized concentration.

It is the tendency then of political atheism to prostrate our republican institutions, which I am to illustrate in this lecture—the tendency to stimulate

and augment the powers of evil, and to suspend the restraining action of the divine government, until self-government becomes impossible, and revolution and anarchy follow, and a despotic government closes the scene.

And whether man be regarded as a mere machine, and motive as acting on mechanical principles; or whether he be considered as a free, accountable, immortal mind,—acting under the responsibilities of eternity; political atheism must differ in its results immensely from Christianity, and its influence be most baleful:—for if it is by motive, as a mechanical power, that it moves to good and deters from evil, what is the motive of a momentary being, to an existence without end? A drop to the ocean—an atom to the universe. But if mind is voluntary and accountable in its action, and motive is the good or evil associated by a divine constitution with holiness or sin, through endless ages, then is the power of the divine government proportioned to the strength of desire for good and aversion to evil, and to the magnitude, and certainty, and duration of its rewards and its penalties—atheism then lets out a race of famished, infuriated animals, goaded by instinct, and unrestrained by prospective hopes and fears, to rend and devour, and destroy, and be destroyed, as one class of insects sweeps away another. How can a republic of such animals be sustained—which no eye of God inspects—no law restrains—upon which no hope of eternity dawns, and no fear darkens?

The necessity of intelligence and virtue to the perpetuity of republican liberty is as real as it is proverbial. Despotism may coerce the obedience of dark ferocious mind against inclination, and lay its heavy hand upon the boiling wrath within. But in republics public sentiment will rule; and what will that public sentiment be which emanates from the heart of man, unchastened by the hopes and fears of eternity, and undirected by coercive human laws, and unhumanized by the kind affinities of the family, and unstimulated to industry by the charm of personal acquisition, possession, and enjoyment? Naked, ferocious, human nature, conglomerated and condensed, in respect to all its tendencies to evil. Rivers do not more copiously and irresistibly bear onward their burthen to the ocean, or the rock, loosed from the cliff, with more certain desolation thunder down the precipice, than man tempted and unrestrained, rushes on to dissipation and ruin.

All governments originate in the necessities of self-defence against the violent evil propensities of man. Walled cities, armies, navies, and notes and bonds, and prisons and death, are memorials indicative of the indomitable propensity of man to evil. It is but a little too which law can preserve and protect from ingenious fraud, or successful violence. It has no sleepless omniscient eye, no omnipresent, omnipotent arm. Such delinquents only can be punished, as can be arrested and convicted by a regular process of evidence. A government is needed to corroborate

the public laws of men, which can look in upon the heart and intimidate and stifle the young desire of evil—which can rouse up fear about the path of guilt—and tranquillize the madness of the heart.

Pagan legislators felt the necessity of such aid—and bad as were the characters of their fictitious divinities, the sanctions of their religion were a blessing compared with the philosophy of Epicurus, which turned off from the world the inspection of the Gods, and the retributions of the future state. Its prevalence in Greece caused her downfall and in the Roman empire was followed by the extinction of Roman patriotism, and by that enervating voluptuousness, which undermined the republic and introduced the despotism of the Cæsars. It was an era of mad ambition and revolution, and proscription, and blood—a political earthquake, from which the republic never recovered, and whose agitations ceased not, till she sought repose in the calm of despotism. Among the Jews, the reign of the same philosophy was to morals, what the reign of the plague is in a great city—every thing good died in its pestilent atmosphere, while all which was evil grew rank and abundant.

There never has been but one government professedly atheistic. The National Assembly of France, in the commencement of the revolution, appointed a committee to inquire and report whether there were or ought to be a God; and the committee reported, that there could be no liberty on earth

while there was believed to be a God in Heaven; and that there is no God; and that death is an eternal sleep. The assembly adopted the report, abolished the Sabbath, burnt the Bible, instituted the decade, and ordained the worship of the Goddess of liberty, in the person of a vile woman. But the consequences were too terrible to be endured: it converted the most polished nation of Europe into a nation of fiends and furies, and the theatre of voluptuous refinement into a stall of blood. The mighty mind, who governs the universe—whose being they had denied, whose word they had burnt, whose worship they had abolished, whose protection they denied, and whose wrath they defied—withdrew his protection, and gave them up; and with the ferocity of famished tigers, they fastened on each other's throats, and commenced the work of death; till quickly few were left alive to tell the tale of wo. And yet this dreadful experiment these men would repeat upon us. The entire corroborating action of the government of God, with all its satellite institutions, they would abolish, to let out upon society, in wrath without mixture and without measure, the impatient depravity of man.

The family—the foundation of the political edifice, the methodizer of the world's business, and the mainspring of its industry—they would demolish. The family—the sanctuary of the pure and warm affections, where the helpless find protection,—the wretched, sympathy,—and the wayward, undying affection, while parental hearts live to love, and pray, and forgive,—they would disband

and desecrate. The family—that school of indelible early impression, and of unextinguished affection—that verdant spot in life's dreary waste, about which memory lingers—that centre of attraction, which holds back the heady and high-minded, and whose cords bring out of the vortex the ship-wrecked mariner, after the last strand of every other cable is parted—these political Vandals would dismantle. The fire on its altars they would put out; the cold hand of death they would place on the warm beatings of its heart—to substitute the vagrancy of desire, the rage of lust, and the solitude, and disease, and desolation, which follow the footsteps of unregulated nature exhausted by excess.

The possession of the soil in fee simple, which to industry is like the action of the sun to the movements of the heavenly bodies, they would exchange for the common field—where men perform their tasks, and receive their rations, and eat, and drink, and sleep, and die—while infancy is committed to the tender mercies of state nurseries in which, during the experiment, in France, about 9 out of 10 died—a system which, by infanticide and disease had in half a century reduced one half the population of the Sandwich Islands, and were it to be universal and permanent, would in a century nearly depopulate the earth.

Thus would political atheism suspend the kind attractions of heaven upon us, and let out the storm of guilty passion, and by one disastrous wave, from stem to stern make a clear breach over us—sweeping us clear of what patriots, and

Christians, and heaven have done to render us happy.

It would unspiritualize our souls, cut off eternity from our being, to hang its leaden weights upon the wheels of our machine, till it run down and stop forever. It would teach us to regard accountability as a fiction, and right and wrong as obsolete terms, without use or meaning—while with signal consistency it anathematized the ministry of Christ, eulogized the most abominable crimes, and covered the most exalted virtues with contempt and obloquy.

The intire system is constructed for the accommodation of the most disgusting licentiousness, and produces the most fearful paroxysm of infuriated depravity. It reduces man to be the insect of a day, and renders murder an event of no more magnitude than the killing of a fly. "What is it to kill a man?" said one of these atheistic philosophers, while the work of death was going on, and the blood was flowing from the guillotine as from an inexhaustible fountain. "Only just to change the direction of a few ounces of blood;" and so, in the progress of the revolution which they contrived and let out upon the world, they changed, in about 5,000,000 of instances, the direction of a few ounces of blood.

But more than sufficient has been said to establish the Vandal tendency of political atheism upon our republican institutions. If the iron governments of Europe, justified by age, custom, power, and the sanctions of eternity perverted, to sustain

them, could not stand, how shall we of yesterday escape, should the action of the same baleful cause be concentrated upon us? To us it would be like the falling of the dam, and the desolation of the unobstructed flood—like the extinction of the orb of day—like the suspension of gravity, and the reign of chaos.

It is not so difficult, however, to convince you of the tendencies of political atheism, as it is to awaken any suitable apprehension of any real danger from the concentrated, indefatigable, and extended action of these men—the very enormity of the system tending to inspire incredulity. Bad indeed, you are prepared to say, is the system—blasphemous—detestable—but what can such men do—mere visionaries, fools, and madmen? No doubt this testimony is true. But if you possessed indubitable evidence of a conspiracy formed to burn the good city of Cincinnati, composed only of visionaries, fools, and madmen, would you sel' your engines and disband your fire-companies and go to sleep because there were no honest and sober men among them? Who is better qualified than visionaries and madmen to scatter firebrands, arrows, and death?

But surely the absurdity of the system must be its antidote.

Alas! Does the history of the world prove that absurdity is an efficacious antidote to error? What absurdities can be conceived greater than men have swallowed in all ages? They are not delicate about the dose, provided its lethean power puts conscience

to sleep and reconciles impunity with crime.

But the system can never prevail. It contains the elements of its own destruction. It would depopulate the world. I know it; but millions in the meantime may perish, as millions in France did perish in the making of the abortive experiment. The philosophists of France believed and taught that the emptying of the earth of one entire generation would be a cheap price for the achievement of atheistic liberty; and they sacrificed hecatombs, and at last discovered that atheism leads to despotism and not to liberty.

But in our country these philosophers are, to be sure, weak, misguided, and visionary; yet they are not ferocious, but mild, polite, well-meaning, honest men. And so, with few exceptions, they were in France, till blood began to flow—and then, like the tame lion who has tasted blood, they were furies;—while from morning till night, and from night to morning, the guillotine groaned with its labor, and wore off its edge in its bloody work. There is no ferocity which is equal to that which prevails where the madness of licentious liberty predominates, and the fear of God, and the protection of law fail, in the presence of an atheistic mob.

But in this country it is not proposed to revolutionize by force, but by public sentiment, till it shall speak out at the polls. And so they proposed to do in France, and drew some honest men into their alliance. But when the crevice was opened it ran blood instead of water; and

though to open it were easy, to close it surpassed their power.

But the people of this country are too enlightened ever to become the dupes of such folly.

No doubt of it, if they will consent to open their eyes upon the menacing evil, and to concentrate upon it the withering power of public indignation and stern resistance. But who can say that an organized band, winding their dark way, and watching their opportunity in some eventful crisis of national peril, may not, in evil power, fall on a moment when a spark upon the train may be irretrievable ruin? And who would trust good-natured, visionary incendiaries about the magazine? And who would sleep over such a mine?

But their numbers are too small, and their influence too contemptible to justify apprehension. The number of vicious, unprincipled, and ambitious, and desperate, and reckless men, of whose influence, through various bad affinities, they might avail themselves, is not small. And scepticism is now the epidemic of the world, as superstition was in the dark ages; and if under the favour of the one, Peter the hermit stirred up a crusade for the cross, it ought to be remembered, that under the other epidemic, Voltaire, with equal calamity and power, stirred up a crusade against it.

A republic whose constituents are intelligence and virtue, afford the most perfect condition of human society; but it is the most delicate, and

complex, and perilous in its construction, and difficult of preservation, and facile of destruction; and when it falls, there is no chaos so dark and dreadful as the anarchy which follows. Well might the angel sent down to announce the plagues of revolution, cry with a loud voice thrice reiterated, "Wo, wo, wo to the inhabitants of the earth!" Of all the materials which God has made, mind, no doubt, is the most powerful; and in its disordered state, the most ungovernable and terrible—for though in great masses, and under mild and efficient supervision, like the mirror surface of the ocean in a calm, it reflects back upon the heavens the images of its beauty, in a moment, should these safe-guards fail, the breath of some pestilent wind may rave over it, and wreck the treasures which are freighted on its bosom. The cloud, as a man's hand, then, ought to be watched, and every individual with dark lantern wending his secret way to the magazine, should be stopped and interrogated.

It is not, then, by a numerical majority at the polls only, that this atheistic conspiracy may destroy us. They may create a pestilent atmosphere, and send out moral contagion, and blow blasting and mildew from between their shriveled lips. They may poison the fountains, and fever the heart, and madden the brain of the nation. They may suspend on the mass of minds those moral attractions of heaven, without which society will dissolve as organic matter would, should the attraction of gravity and cohesion cease. Let the

belief and feeling of accountability fail from the public mind, and poverty, and envy, and ambition, and lust, be summoned to a crusade against religion, and purity, and property, and law, and how long would the police of our cities protect us? How soon would the laws of the land be cobwebs, and crime roll over us its wave of desolation, as once the waters of the flood swept over the earth!

I am not an alarmist, to proclaim danger when there is none, nor a false prophet to conceal it when it approaches. I trust that my country will live and rise to a glorious immortality. But if she should fall on evil times, and be ruined—while the fires of her burning ascend, and the fragments of her wreck are passing by, and the chains of her sons going to captivity are riveting, I intend to be able to retain the consolation of Hector amid the ruins of burning Troy:

"Si Pergama dextra
Defendi possent, etiam hac defensa fuissent."

The relations of the divine government to republican institutions—the absolute necessity of an all-pervading moral influence, and the certain direful consequences of an exclusively prevalent leaven of infidelity, are, I am persuaded, but imperfectly, and to a very limited extent, understood. It is my purpose to give the subject a thorough discussion, as associated with the open avowed purpose of a class of men, to set aside utterly the govern-

ment of God, and the existence of marriage, of separate property, and the influence of all our political institutions.

Let the adaptation of the means to the end be well considered. Tracts, and lectures, and paragraphs, and treatises, addressed to all the principles of human discontent and insubordination, which have rendered it difficult to protect life and property, and maintain the peace and order of society. Recognising their misery—sympathising with them in their wrongs, and inflaming by argument and by ridicule their envy, and pride, and rage. Tracts filled with specious cavils, and popular sophistry, and undermining scepticism, eradicating conscience and principle, and inspiring ridicule and blasphemy, and the most unlimited licentiousness, directed especially to the uninformed, and unevangelized portion of our population in city and country, on the farm and in the work-shop and manufactory. Swarming, like the frogs of Egypt, from the centre to the circumference of our land. Designed and eminently calculated to divide society against itself, by fostering invidious distinctions between the laboring and intellectual classes, and the relatively poor and the rich—exhibiting industry, and separate property, and virtue, as offences against society, and poverty and vice as the result only of religion, and laws, and persecution, till the physical power, misdirected and infuriated, shall turn that impatient energy against the institutions of liberty, which in Europe was turned against the feudal system, and thrones, and despotism.

Let not the result of these means and of false security be forgotten, in overturning one of the strongest governments in Europe, with fewer means and greater hindrances than attend their experiment here.

When Voltaire boasted that he was tired of hearing it said that twelve men overturned idolatry and established the Christian religion, and that he would prove that one man was sufficient to expel it from the world, he knew that his infidel clubs were organized and concocting the poison which books, and tracts, and plays, and every species of publication, were circulating through every artery and vein of a great empire. He saw the leaven fermenting—the fever rising—and the unquiet earth heaving. But while the magazines of wo were filling, the nation slept. While the storm was coming on, those who raised it were despised. "What can they do?" said the king, in the majesty of his power. "What can they do?" said the nobility which guarded the throne. "Chimerical, contemptible, what can they do" said the bishops, "against us, who hold the conscience of the nation by the power of habit and the terrors of eternity?" To them it was no more alarming than the mild cloud of evening. But soon it blackened the heavens, and poured down desolation. The mining to the ear of false confidence was as the ticking of a clock beneath the surface, till in a moment it became the voice of mighty thunderings. The same results from the same causes had come to

pass in England, had not the sagacious Pitt, warned by the fate of his neighbors, consented to take counsel of his fears, and prepare a resisting power, and to his foresight and firmness, the civilized world owes its exemption from the overwhelming scourge of atheistic revolution.

3. There is no trait in the character of man more surprising than his infatuated insensibility to the danger of moral causes.

With the natural world we can make him acquainted, and lead him to foresee the evil, and hide himself; while, upon the moral world, he opens his vacant eye, from generation to generation, uninstructed and unwarned. Its laws are as obvious, its causes of evil as deadly and as uniform in individuals, families, cities and nations; and still while the host of evil is mustering, and augmenting, and moving on to their work of ruin, he cries peace, and ridicules those who talk of danger. All nations have been let down from the high tone of early vigor and correct principle, by the outcry against bigotry, and severity, and needless scrupulosity; and by good natured, simpering, liberal, careless, fool-hardy security in going down stream. It was thus the Epicurean philosophy unharnessed the loins and quenched the courage, and divided the counsels of patriotic Greece. The same infection extended to Rome, and touched with death the iron sinews and proud heart of that vast empire. Among the Jews it was saying to the seers, see not, and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, prophesy smoothe

things—prophesy deceits—which prepared the way for that unparalleled moral corruption which ended in the destruction of their city, and the dispersion of their nation.

The same process as the natural result of age, and wealth, and voluptuousness, has begun among ourselves.

The energetic virtue of our Puritan ancestry, while we refuse not the blessings it has sent down to us, and which, with a less elastic tone had never reached us, we are beginning to make the subject of apology and the butt of ridicule. From generation to generation the threadbare story is going down, they were too strict—while every son who, in religion and moral rectitude, resembles his Puritan sire, is made the subject of charitable outcry and patriotic suspicion, that he is plotting against the liberties of his country.

Now what have these banded Goths and Vandals to do but to sing our own songs over their cups, and repeat our own stale jests, and join us in unharnessing the nation from virtuous restraint, by loading with ridicule, suspicion, and obloquy, those who know that righteousness exalteth a nation, while sin is the reproach of any people. If a foreign army of half a million should invade us, the danger would be small, for the effort would correspond with the exigency. But when an order of men are systematically mustering and marshalling, and applying those moral causes which, in all ages, have been more potent in the dissolution of nations than fleets and armies,—

how is it that those who fear their power are deemed enthusiasts, and charged with the designs they would avert, while smiling, thoughtless, reckless, good natured men, who cry peace, are regarded as the overflowings of charity and wisdom? But it is a charity which in all ages has dug the grave of liberty, and a wisdom which has buried deep the best interests of man.

If we look at the power of small organized bodies acting systematically and perseveringly upon improvident and unorganized masses, we may learn not to despise this atheistic fraternity.

The alertness and perseverance which characterize minorities in evil, is as proverbial as the phlegmatic indolence and security of majorities on the side of virtue and order—commonly the one gains and the other loses, till the majority changes sides. In all republics, also, the gravitating tendencies of evil unaided are powerful. All demagogues flatter the vices of the community, and all who practice licentiousness, and live by its patronage, are open-mouthed for liberty, and infuriated against bigots. What, then, have these men to do but to row downward with the tide?

In every political movement also, the unprincipled have the advantage over the principled and sober, in their unlimited variety of means. These considerations, without organized treason, tolerated by our abounding charity, made the fathers of the revolution tremble before the constitution was formed, whose administration, though auspicious has not allayed the apprehensions of our wisest

and best men. Is it not an infatuated security, then, which refuses to fear, and cries peace, when an organized association of men, wise to do evil, and aided by the immemorial downward tendencies of human nature, are directing their most powerful assaults on our most vulnerable and unprotected points.

Consider, also, with how much greater ease society may be undermined and destroyed, than organized and built up.

Slowly and reluctantly does human nature rise from ignorance, and sloth, and animalism—and many hands, and constant effort is required to raise and hold up the sluggish mass, while a single hand may suffice to cut the cord, and let it thunder back upon destruction. A well tuned orchestra, and a harmonious choir, demand science and skill, while a fool can put the instruments out of tune and send out notes of discord. To raise the garden to its highest state of culture, taste and beauty combine the experience of generations. But a herd of swine may root it all up in a day.

It must not be forgotten, neither, in this comparison of forces, that for the destruction of our institutions, the bad passions only of our nature are needed in a field where the seed are thick sown spontaneously, and the vegetation is rapid, and rank, and the harvest abundant, and without culture. No bibles are needed, nor sanctuaries, nor laws, nor courts, nor sabbaths, nor ministers of evil to prevent the extinction, and secure the

continuance of selfishness, and pride, and envy, and covetousness, and ambition, and fraud, and sloth, and inebriation, and revenge, while all possible influence of revelation, and law, and schools, and families and religious institutions can scarcely keep down the intrusive weeds, and give space and nutrition to the plants of virtue.—What a compact, then, is that in which the enemies of our republican institutions have only to aid the vices which flourish spontaneously, and strangle the sickly exotics, which our utmost care can scarcely keep alive.

LECTURE V.

THE

PERILS OF ATHEISM

TO

THE NATION.

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2 PETER, III. 3, 4.

KNOWING THIS FIRST, THAT THERE SHALL COME IN THE LAST DAYS SCOFFERS, WALKING AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS, AND SAYING, WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING? FOR SINCE THE FATHERS FELL ASLEEP, ALL THINGS CONTINUE AS THEY WERE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION.

THE persons described in this passage, denied the providence of God, as the administration of a moral government, by rewards and punishments, and asserted the indiscriminating empire of the laws of nature. From the uniformity of his providential government, they inferred that no intelligent moral government existed. They were scoffers at God and religion, walking after their own lusts. They are a particular development of wickedness in the last time—the gospel dis-

pensation. Their appearance commenced early, and in modern days has come out in ample desolation.

We have given some account of this class of men in modern Europe, and have entered upon the consideration of their efforts in this country.

It is proposed in this lecture, to illustrate in continuation, the perils of the entire system of scepticism, organized and unorganized, which goes to suspend the action of the government of God, and the influence of christianity upon this nation; and

1. The extent of our country renders the efficient supervision of our laws impossible, without a vigorous all-pervading tone of intelligence and moral principle. Our interests are, in fact, one; but our vision is limited, and our information imperfect, and our selfishness, and pride, and passion are great, and impatient of self-denial, and contradiction; and misinformation, and jealousy, and local prejudice are of spontaneous growth, and, with the sinister culture of reckless ambition, of rampant vegetation.

When, therefore, we consider the vigor of our national intellect—the freedom of our habits—the self-will and self-sufficiency of our republican character—our boundless enterprise, our corrupting abundance, and voluptuous dissipation, and fractious impatience of rebuke or control—is this a nation, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and so eminently fitted for self-destruction, to say unto God, "depart from us, for we desire not

the knowledge of thy ways?" and to Christ, "let us alone, thou Jesus of Nazareth, for what have we to do with thee?"

Our danger is greatly augmented if we consider, moreover, that beside the collisions of individuals, with law and order, some of our most perilous movements are the conflicts of independent states—of mighty nations, condensed for particular purposes into one nation, by the individual suffrage of the entire people; and that often one half the nation is roused in furious political strife, to counteract the desires of the other half.

Now, what motives of human origin and application can extend their all-pervading and efficient control over such a mass of mind, so diversified by circumstances, and so delicately, and complexly, and slenderly allied, and so infuriated often by passion, pride, and discontent?

Who but God can speak efficaciously to the waves of such an unquiet sea? What but the omnipotent attractions of his glory, and the sanctions of his eternal government, and the tranquillizing influence of his gospel upon renovated mind, can bring and hold such discordant and powerful materials in prosperous social alliance? These atheists might as well form a project to annihilate the sun, and hold the material universe together by cobwebs instead of his attractions, as to withdraw from masses of depraved mind the moral influence of his government and the institutions of christianity.

It was with the utmost difficulty that our union

was formed. Nothing but an urgent necessity, and wisdom, and prudence, and patience, and condescension, and confidence in God, and his protection and blessing, saved us. When our numbers were small, our extent limited, our capital, and credit, and enterprise in embryo; and at an age of relative purity of morals, and before the agitations of party spirit assumed their fiery aspect, and terrific power, the patriots whom nature and the revolution had made great, and invested with unlimited influence, found it extremely difficult to achieve the compromise that made us one. And when it was done, it was with trembling that the patriot navigators, with Washington at the helm, launched forth upon the untried deep; and though, as yet, we have not foundered, not one of the patriot band have died in full and certain hope. Nor is the danger past. Dark clouds environ our horizon now, and rocks and quicksands are about our way. Our ablest captains, who in ordinary times conceal their fears, open their eyes and tell us that there are breakers, and a stiff wind, and a lee shore, and that they cannot be answerable for the safety of the ship. That she will weather the storm they hope, but fear that in evil hour she may strike or founder. The concussions of party spirit now, are not the healthful conflicts of jealous liberty, but the paroxysms of envy, and desperate ambition, and deadly hate—not the breath of zephyrs, and the gentle undulations of the lake, to prevent stagnation; but the perilous commotion of powerful elements.

What, then, in such a crisis, might not be anticipated, should a band of these political experimenters get on board, and gain the helm, on purpose to wreck the ship, to re-construct from its fragments another of better model, and to be navigated under better auspices,—to throw overboard compass, quadrant, and chart, and put out the sun to steer by conjecture and the stars? What if they are chimerical, and honest? How many misguided men aboard does it require to wreck a ship in a storm?

The unexampled power and prosperity of our nation, does but amplify, and hasten, and render more inevitable the causes of our ruin, without the corresponding moral influence of the government of God.

Steam has, indeed, annihilated time and distance, and canals and rail roads have exalted the valleys, and brought down the mountains; and mechanism, by its abbreviations of labor, is relaxing the curse on beast and man, and multiplying a hundred fold the products of human labor.

But if other republics, on their little territories, and in their dilatory course, accumulated the means of effeminacy and ruin in a few generations, how swiftly must our sun roll up to its meridian, to set among the clouds generated by the decomposition of our rank abundance!

Nor let us confide presumptuously in the sufficiency of a national education. For though ignorance may destroy us, knowledge alone cannot save. Knowledge is, indeed, power; but

it is power to kill as well as to make alive, as it is wielded by the madness of the heart, or by moral principle. The men who terrified the world by their crimes, did not lack mental culture.

It is the heart which governs the intellect, and not the intellect which governs the heart; and it is by the education of the national heart, in the first principles of the government of God, and the guidance of the national will, by the hopes and fears of eternity, added to the sanctions of time, that we can undergird the ship, and secure to her a safe passage and quiet moorings.

2. The very greatness of our liberty is its most terrific attribute, in the presence of organized licentiousness and demoralization.

In a despotic government, force may protect us, where public sentiment is too corrupt to secure the execution of the laws. But in a republic it is not so. There, when public sentiment falters, the laws have no power; and then, first anarchy, and next despotism ensues. The genius of our government, and the competitions of party have introduced universal suffrage. The door is wide open to all who are born, and to all who immigrate, and cannot be shut. We must live by universal suffrage or perish. If we can imbue with knowledge and virtue the mass, we shall live; but if irreligion and profligacy predominate, sure as the march of time, we fail. Such mobs among us, as in England they play with as the lion would play with the kid, would destroy us. Force enough

to quell them, would, in the hand of an ambitious demagogue, be force enough to enslave us. Ours must be a self-government or despotism. Such a nation as this must be greatly free, or crushed by the most rigorous despotism that ever extorted groans from suffering humanity. Do any exult in our safety, and bid defiance to disaster, because we are now so free, and so powerful?—The inconstant ocean might as well exult in her momentary tranquillity, because her waves are above control; when it is the very circumstance of their freedom and indomitable power which gives to the atmosphere such power upon the fluid mass.

Twice, in France, the physical power has gained the ascendency over law; and by the last victory, the discovery has been made, that to patriots, cities are fortresses, and pavements munitions. This is one of the most glorious and dreadful discoveries of modern days—glorious in its ultimate results, in the emancipation of the world, but dreadful in those intervening revolutions which power may achieve in the conquest of liberty, without corresponding intelligence and virtue for its permanent preservation.

The conquest of liberty is not difficult—the question is, where to put it—with whom to entrust it. If to the multitude who achieved it, it be committed, it will perish by anarchy. If national guards are employed for its defence, the bayonets which protect it are at any moment able to destroy it for a military despotism. If to a

republican king it be entrusted, it will have to be regulated by state policy, and fed on bread and water, until the action of her heart, and the movement of her tongue, and the power of her arm, as under the deadly incubus, shall cease. THERE IS NOT IN THIS WIDE WORLD A SAFE DEPOSIT FOR LIBERTY, BUT THE HEARTS OF PATRIOTS, SO ENLIGHTENED, AS TO BE ABLE TO JUDGE OF CORRECT LEGISLATION, AND SO PATIENT AND DISINTERESTED, AS TO PRACTICE SELF-DENIAL, AND SELF-GOVERNMENT, FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.

But can such a state of society be found and maintained without the bible, and the institutions of christianity? Did a condition of unperverted liberty, uninspired by christianity, ever bless the world through any considerable period of duration? The power of a favoring clime, and the force of genius, did thrust up from the dead level of monotonous despotism, the republics of Greece to a temporary liberty; but it was a patent model only, compared with such a nation as this; and it was partial, and capricious, and of short duration, and rendered illustrious rather by the darkness which preceded and followed, than by the benign influence of its own beams.

Certainly it is christianity which, in this country, rocked the cradle of our liberties, defended our youth, and brought us up to manhood. And it has been proved that under her auspices three millions and twelve millions of people may be protected and governed. But that twenty, fifty, or a hundred millions can, without a vast aug-

mentation of her moral power over mind, has not been proved—while all past analogies, and all present circumstances of our nation announce that christianity is our best hope, and that without it our destruction does not slumber.

During all past ages, the vast majority of the human family, unblest by revelation, have been idolaters and slaves; and at the present time, all nations upon whom the sun of righteousness has not arisen, are in deep darkness, and are crushed by a grievous despotism. Daylight is not more uniformly found in the track of the sun, than civil liberty is found in the track of christianity, and despotism in its absence.

The problem then to be settled by this young but mighty nation, is this—can a sufficient intellectual illumination be combined with a sufficient power of moral purity, to create and perpetuate a predominant and efficacious public sentiment in favor of a correct morality, and efficient law for the protection of virtue, and the punishment of crime? If this can be achieved, the nation will be the safe depository of liberty for ever. The heart of this mighty people will be its abiding sanctuary, and the arm of this nation, uncorrupt and undebased, will, under God, be its everlasting protection; and we shall be the greatest, happiest nation that ever lived. Violence shall not be heard in our land, nor wasting and destruction within our borders. Our walls will be salvation, and our gates will be praise. Our sun will not go down, nor our moon wane. The Lord

will be our unsetting sun, and our God will be our glory.

We shall not appreciate the danger of an organized effort against our civil and religious institutions, without considering the various bad affinities of our depraved nature, upon which they may easily act, and bring them into unconscious subserviency to their purpose.

It cannot be denied that human nature lusteth to envy. No passions in man are more powerful than selfishness, and pride, and inordinate desire and discontent. These were the origin of the contest between the patricians and plebeians in Rome, which continually agitated, and at length destroyed the republic. It is a distinction in society inseparable from the diverse capacities, characters, habits, and employments of men in the different departments of labor, which are indispensable to the most elevated possible condition of society. It exists in every republic, and no doubt it is a constitution of things inseparable from the intelligent perfect society of the universe.

But it is a constitution of providence against which rebellion has rolled its most furious tide; and especially, as the inequality of conditions is aggravated by crime among uninformed masses, goaded by suffering, and reckless of principle, it constitutes a most malignant and terrific physical power, looking up with green eyed envy upon all the happy fruits of virtue, and knowledge, and industry in the orders of society above.

None who have not moved through this moral atmosphere, and watched the eye, and noted the significant tones of complaint, and movements of subdued but bitter feeling, can conceive what a magazine lies under the foundations of all which is valuable to man.

This jealousy of the higher orders of society is especially powerful against the rich—it is almost like the ceaseless burning of heated iron. There is pervading the entire class of relative poverty a strong feeling of dissatisfaction, as if they were injured, and as if the rich were the aggressors, and were revelling on the spoils which had been wrested from them.

The various forms of dishonesty, and peculation, and fraud, and violence, are but so many symptomatic indications of the impatient violence which, but for the strong arm of the law, would break out in one levelling prostration of all which art, and industry and science have reared up.

With the constant admonition, that this state of feeling is wrong—that inequality of condition is inseparable from the best possible constitution of society—that its miseries are adventitious, from the perversion of heaven's wisdom and goodness, yet without intellectual perversion—with the understanding and conscience armed against such feelings—with the omniscient eye of God on the heart, and his voice reiterating, be still, and know that I am God—with his sword drawn, and his lightnings at hand, and his thunderings uttering their voices, and all the retributions of time

and eternity impending, it is as much as can be done to prevent explosion, and revolution, and more than is done to protect life, and liberty, and property.

The constancy of peculation in trade—the ingenuity of swindlers, and pick-pockets—the dexterity of theft—the violence of robbery, and the increasing recklessness of murder, show what, as the government of God falls back, is rising up and rushing in upon us—show that the mountain is unquiet, and that these doctrines of atheistic leveling liberty, are like so many sparks falling upon a train already prepared for an explosion, and waiting only for the moment of ignition.

Who that has to deal with property, and those who covet, does not know the strong fever which burns beneath the restraints of law? How much would any man well versed in the ways of men, give for his outstanding debts, of which he could produce no evidence, or which the laws sustained by executive power could not collect? The relations of civilized society, and separate property, could not exist an hour after public sentiment, and the physical power had ceased to sustain the laws.

Let this pestilent philosophy, then, augment the moral obliquity of the lower classes of society, by adding the sanction of principle to their perverted, impatient, alienated feeling. Let private property and inequality of condition be stigmatized as an artificial condition,—the work of priests and lawyers—of church and state—a vile civil and ecclesiastical

aristocracy. Let the laws be traduced as systems of organized injustice and vile persecution; and the soothing accents of sympathy and hope be breathed upon the ear of suffering humanity by these dear lovers of the people. Let them inculcate on every heart the people's wrongs, and their own magnanimous sympathy. Let their voice be heard without—at the corners of the streets—at the chief places of concourse—at the opening of the gates, and in all the places of strong drink and inebriation, and sinks of pollution, and infamy, and wo—ascribing their sufferings to priestcraft, and property, and marriage, and virtue, and law. Let them flatter the multitude for virtues which they do not possess, and eulogize as virtues their rank crimes—putting light for darkness, and darkness for light. Let them praise one another, and denounce all whose concord with them does not promise aid to their project. Let them bargain their suffrage to ambitious demagogues, who care not by what ladder they rise or what is demolished, provided they ascend—upon condition that one good turn shall be repaid by another—until by collusion, and the concentration of evil forces, they gain the balance in some closely contested election, with a sufficient mass of corrupt propensity, and evil daring, and infatuated madness, to seize the moment to let out their experiment. Then, indeed, it will be but for a moment. But that moment will be the downfall of liberty, and the overturn-

ings of revolution, and the infuriated pouring out of blood. It will be but a moment, and the indignation will have passed over; but like the inundation, it will find a paradise, and leave behind it an utter desolation.

If you think that such a crisis cannot come on our country, you have not studied the constitution of society, the character of man, the past history of moral causes, or the existing signs of the times. You have not read the glowing pages of specious argument, of powerful eloquence, of spirit-stirring indignation—pouring adventitious action upon the fever of the brain, and the madness of the heart.

Hear these Catilines harangue their troops, in the 500,000 grogshops of the nation—the temples and inspiration of atheistic worship:—"Comrades, patriots, friends,—The time has come. Long have you suffered, and deeply, and in all sorts of ways. Property has been denied you, that others might roll in splendor; and toil imposed, that they might inherit ease; and poverty inflicted, that they might be blessed with more than heart could wish; and to add ignominy to fraud, and persecution to insult, your names are cast out as evil. You snatch the crumbs from their table, and they call it stealing. The momentary alleviation of your woes by stimulus, drunkenness; and your intercourse as freeborn animals, is branded with outlawry and burning shame; and all this by that intolerant aristocracy of wealth, religion and law. You are miserable, and you are oppressed; but you hold

in your own hand the power of redress. Those splendid dwellings, and glittering equipages—those cultivated farms and cattle on a thousand hills—those barns, bursting out with all manner of plenty—those voluptuous cities, and stores, crowded with merchandize—and boats and ships, transporting wealth—and those banks and vaults of gold are yours. You are the people—numbers are with you—votes are with you. Rise, freemen—rise—to the polls—to the polls—and all is yours."

It is true this leveling system would destroy the industry of the world. It would augment the number, and aggravate the poverty of the poor, as it would expel the arts, banish commerce, stop the plough, and shut up the work-shop, and send back the ruined race to skins, and bows and arrows. But what is all this to a short-sighted, infuriated population, who know only that they are miserable, and feel that all above them is invidious distinction and crime; and that to rise, it is only necessary to grasp the pillars of society, and pull it down? Is there no treason in breathing such doctrines upon the ear of discontented millions? It is throwing firebrands into a magazine.

The numbers to whom these men and their doctrines have access, are not duly considered by those who think that there is no danger. To the uninformed population of our cities, and mechanical and manufacturing establishments, as well as to our sparse frontier settlements, they pay a sedulous attention, teaching inebriation, and lust, and im-

piety, by caricature and the eye, as well as by the ear.

To all the vicious, incensed by the outlawry of public sentiment, they send the tokens of their sympathy, the manuals of their instruction, and the trumpet-call to action, with unfaltering confidence of their aid.

Upon all the wretched young men, whom pleasure has seduced from the right way, and stung to madness and desperation by loss of character and blighted hopes, such as Catiline drew after him to overthrow the liberties of Rome, they may calculate, without danger of deception.

While the covetous, who live, by the vices of the community, and fear that we are going too fast, without intending the extremities which come, may aid to bring them on beyond retrieve.

Nominal believers, from great aversion to the accountabilities of an endless government, and punishment, may, from repulsion on the one hand, and sympathetic attractions on the other, be made more than neutral, while the forces are collecting, and the conflict is coming on.

And all who regard the bible as a dangerous book for popular use, might aid the common effort of restricting its circulation, and putting down rival denominations—intending only their own benefit, but unable as the crisis rolled on, to stop the overpowering evil.

The direct and indirect influence, then, of this poisonous leaven, industriously propagated, and favored by human nature, and the multiplied coinciden-

ces of character, interest, and circumstance, can not be small, or be safely despised.

But if to this onward movement of concentrated power, you add the systematic effort which is making to break down the moral resistances of the community, and to open an unobstructed admission to the flood, our solicitude may well increase.

The natural course of business and pleasure, in its bearings upon the sabbath, is sufficiently appalling. This day is, no doubt, the great organ of the divine administration. It is of little consequence whether men disbelieve the existence of God, or forget his character and laws, and authority. But separate from the sabbath and social worship, no efficacious means exist for the religious instruction of mankind; and the cessation of the sabbath is the abolition of the government of God as really as could be effected by the disbelief of his being.

But this dreadful work of obliteration, unplanned and undesigned, is going on as fast almost as atheism could desire. The stream of commerce on our seacoast is now swelled by the streams of dissipation which pour out from our cities, as from inexhaustible fountains, and by the streams of business, private and national, which hold on their unchecked and augmenting career—while our inland seas, and canals, and our stages, and the steam-boats, and the rail-roads, in all directions, seem to vie with each other in their all-pervading and lengthened career of sabbath day violation. Alas! the whole nation seems to be on

the sabbath in a state of migration, and never in one stay—the sanctuary empty, and every stage, and boat, and tavern full. Who can arrest and instruct this mass of vagrant migrating mind—and who train up the children of the nation, abandoned to ignorance and irreligion? Could the nation be intellectually educated, were all its instructers, and all its pupils driving about on wheels and boats, in hours consecrated to study? And can the nation be instructed in the government of God, and its own relative duties and responsibilities, by the way side, or on the canal, or the lake—running unceasingly the race of business and pleasure? Assuredly this mighty nation cannot be compelled by law to stop and consecrate the sabbath to the great and benevolent ends of its institution. But it is equally certain, that if it will not voluntarily pause, and do homage to the wisdom and benevolence of God, by a spontaneous rest for purposes of religious education, and moral culture, the nation is undone. Europe never will be qualified for liberty until she keeps her sabbaths in a better manner; and this happy nation will not long possess any thing to be envied above the kingdoms of Europe, after the influence of her sabbaths has passed away.

But as if the fates did not turn the spindle fast enough which unrolls our destiny, and lets us down, these conspirators, aided inconsiderately by multitudes, who know not their purpose, are turning a systematic jealousy upon the sabbath and its friends. The observance of it, by our fathers and our-

selves, in the only way in which its great designs can be answered, is ridiculed; our solicitude for its preservation stigmatized as sainted hypocrisy; our meek supplications and reasonings against its legalized violation, adduced as pregnant evidence of conspiracy against our country's liberty.

Great efforts are made also to inspire with jealousy, and to play off against one another, the great christian denominations of our land—to render our resistance impotent, and the very name of christian odious.

While they were few and feeble, they were despised; but their multiplication has inspired alarm, and no hope remains but to divide and conquer. Infidels behold with terror the great denominations assimilating in evangelical feeling and effort; and they know that the consummation of confidence and love among us would be death to their hopes. But apprised—too well apprised of the infirmities of good men, and how open their ears are to suspicion—how much faster false accusation flies than detection follows; and that lies repeated produce on millions the odium which might justly attach to the reality, they cease not from their whisperings and false accusations. They are aware how envy opens the ear to detraction, and guards it against the evidence of integrity, by listless inattention, or a jealous scrutiny. They appreciate fully the credulity of men, and the power of a terrified imagination; which, the more it looks into darkness, and the less it can see, the more it believes that it swarms with gor-

gons, hydras, and chimeras dire. They know how tenacious we all are of civil and religious liberty, and that nothing would sooner cover a denomination with infamy than to attempt its own aggrandizement on the ruin of other denominations. And with these elements in view, they seem to have surveyed their ground, and staked their cause on the prospect of sowing discord among brethren, by rumors and false accusation.

Their plan is evidently to play off their artillery first upon one denomination, flattering the rest, till the first may be humbled; the next most feared and hated is to take its turn, and be battered down—giving to the most tame-spirited and abject, the privilege of being eaten up the last.

A furious infidel demagogue, not long since, was pouring out his heated invective against the presbyterians. A gentleman present said to him,—"why do you single out the presbyterians? Other denominations preach the same doctrines, and have revivals, and propagate the bible, tracts, and missions." The answer was, "one at a time. We will dispose of the rest when we have taken care of you."

The union of church and state by one, or by all denominations, is the most foolish, baseless calumny which was ever uttered. There never was an enterprise more opposed to all the feelings of all the citizens of the United States, nurtured from their infancy in the principles of liberty, and no project could be conceived more abso-

lutely impossible, or which would concentrate such an overwhelming tide of public sentiment against it. There is, however, one union of church and state which is possible, and to which the eyes of the community may well be directed. It is the offered alliance of political men in power, with one or another rival denomination, sought for purposes of ambition, or by a tottering administration, to sustain its brief authority, or to perpetuate its power.

It is in this way only that the church ever was united with the state. The church never sought the alliance—never conspired, and never achieved any such union of the state. The state has always sought the alliance of the church, and in republics the danger is not less of this kind of tampering and corruption than in monarchies. It is true that public sentiment would not long endure it, and the favored denomination would be corrupted and ruined by the foul embrace, as the church in this alliance always has been. Yet the thought is full of terror, that the time may ever come when unprincipled men, to paralyze the influence of christianity, and perpetuate their own bad eminence, shall be able to marshal with jealousy and hate, the great denominations of our land, one against another. For so mighty are they, and so furious are ecclesiastical politics, that the conflict would be like the battle of angels—opening infernal artillery on the one side, and heaping mountains on their foes on the other. But mark my words: there will never be a union

of church and state in this nation, unless it be one which is sought by infidels in power, to perpetuate their own ascendency—and it will commence in persecution, and end in civil war.

There is one device more put into operation by the atheistic fraternity, which, in ingenuity on their part, and credulity on the part of others, surpasses all which has been witnessed in modern days.

It is the device of making the performance of our christian duties, and the exercise of our religious liberty, evidence of conspiracy against liberty; and the most beneficent and indispensable efforts to perpetuate our republican institutions evidence of treason. It is reduced to a certainty that civil government cannot administer the moral influence which is needed to diffuse and perpetuate moral principle and virtue through the nation; and that a vast effort of spontaneous benevolence must be made to rescue our nation from barbarian ignorance and fiendish depravity. This auspicious work the several christian denominations are attempting with praiseworthy diligence, by efforts to educate a competent ministry, to multiply the bible, to distribute tracts, to send out and sustain missionaries, and build churches and bring our wandering millions under evangelical instruction.

And what do we hear but the outcry of a conspiracy to unite church and state? And these are the items of the evidence against us: we have a Bible Society, sustained by all denomina-

tions, and have attempted to supply every family in the nation with bibles—and this is one evidence of treason.

We have a Sabbath School Union, in which a million of children are taught to read and understand the bible; and sabbath school libraries are springing up over the land—and this is another evidence of treason. An American Tract Society, to send out to every door, over city and land, fragments of knowledge, which, by larger book and libraries, would never be sent—little portions of the bread of life, till the main supply can come up; and what do we hear but "conspiracy! conspiracy!" And our tracts are held up, and shaken in our faces, as evidence to strike us dumb. Yes, we have the audacity, in day light, to print and give away tracts. Time would fail me to mention all the logical evidences of our guilt of this sort, with the publication and repetition of which the brazen throat of the lying trump of fame has been worn smooth and polished, or to describe the apparitions and frights which have danced in disturbed imaginations, over the land like the gambols of witches in days of yore.

Truly, it would be very convenient to an invading army, coming to take away our liberty, to fill the country with panic fear of their own soldiers, and to need no other evidence to confirm distrust, but to refer to their rifles, and bayonets, and excellent discipline, and ample munitions; and yet, such, and only such are the proofs by

which atheists would propagate the alarm of church and state union. But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, whatever theirs may be, but spiritual—moral—the weapons of truth and reason, and fervent prayer, and universal action. We mean by the moral influence of christianity to save both atheists and ourselves from ruin; and in what better, or other way, can we do it, than to be instant in season, and out of season, to spread the bible, and circulate tracts, and multiply ministers and missionaries to preach the gospel? And yet it is this exercise of our rights, and performance of our republican and christian duties—doing just such things to promote christianity and civil liberty, as our accusers are doing to secure its destruction, which they take up and propagate as evidence of treasonable designs.

But, by such evidence, what may not be proved? I can prove most conclusively, that the farmers and manufacturers, merchants and mechanics, of this city, have formed a terrible conspiacy to burn us all up. Is it not notorious that the farmers are collecting hay all summer, a very combustible material, which all the fall and winter they are bringing in and stowing away in certain places in the city? What can this be, for if it is not to set the city on fire?

Then, the manufacturers are pouring in, and crowding our stores with cotton goods, a most combustible material, reserved, no doubt, against the day of conflagration. What else can they

be intended for? And then, we are credibly informed, by men who have been eye witnesses of the fact, that there are hundreds of places in this city, where day and night men are employed in making shavings, which, added to the hay and cotton, would make a most horrible conflagration—and what else can they possibly make them for? And as if this were not enough to burn us up, our steam boats are continually bringing in tar, and pitch, and turpentine, whose flames water cannot quench. And then there is a number of banks, with great deep, dark vaults, filled with money, half as much as the Bible Society has stowed away to buy up for slaves the people of the United States. What else can the banks want money for, but to buy these materials to burn up the city? And we are credibly informed, that nearly every great city in the land is in the same perilous condition. Do you not think we had better put out the lights and ring the bells?—just as much cause for it as to ring the tocsin of alarm about church and state conspiracy, to take away our liberties.

The bearing of these false accusations on the population of our great cities, is especially terrific; for to the multitude who believe them, they are, in their exasperating influence, the same as if the pious part of the nation were attempting to enslave them, and are calculated to rouse up in self-defence, those infuriated movements which shall bid defiance to law, and with the pavements of the streets batter down our institutions.

In monarchical governments, the political influ-

ence of cities is a match for the throne. Twice has France been revolutionized, and Europe shaken by the good city of Paris; and London, had not the reform bill passed, had probably revolutionized England. In our own country, our cities wield no small portion of the political power of the nation—they are the depositories of the national capital—the channels of intercourse, the concentration of intellect, and enterprise, and physical power, which, if not bound to good behaviour by the fear of God, and an unperverted public sentiment, no police can govern, no troops control. There, also, are those magazines of wo, reserved for the day of vengeance; made up of ignorance, improvidence, and crime, and infuriated envy and wretchedness—at the disposal of irreligious and ambitious men.

It is a problem yet to be solved, whether, under a republican government, and within the reach of a perverted and profligate suffrage, the police of our cities can be permanently invested with power sufficient to execute the laws for the protection of life, and liberty, and property. By an all pervading intellectual and moral culture, it can be done; but without an efficient, constant, successful effort on this point, the floods of desolation will burst out and roll over us. The evangelization, or demoralization of our cities, may be the pivot on which our own, and the world's destiny will turn.

With respect to the remedy for political athe-

ism, a few things, before we close, may properly be said.

It is perfectly evident that we must not rely chiefly on legal protection and municipal regulations. This would be to perpetuate the mistake—to reap the disappointment of all past ages. The experiment of governing mind by force, has been thoroughly made, and found abortive. The providence of God is emancipating mind, with reference to its ultimate universal government, by intelligence, and moral influence, and public sentiment, acting under the guidance of heaven, and the sanctions of eternity.

Laws need not, cannot be dispensed with. But exclusive reliance on them would inevitably be fatal. Their benign efficacy depends on a state of preparation, preceding their action—upon a moral culture and discipline—upon correct views, habits and feelings, and an unperverted, powerful, public sentiment; without which, Xerxes might as well chastise and chain the Hellespont, as laws control an undisciplined, turbulent community.

Particularly must all penal laws against atheism, and infidelity, and heresy be forever impotent; for free inquiry is the birth-right, and the duty of man, and the only condition of all pervading truth, and intelligent self-government. In this age of universal action, men will think; and the more obstructions you multiply, the more will the obstructed tide rise and burst out in eccentric desolation. Penalties and force will not avail to repress error; and if they would, their adaptation

is equal to repress the truth—and the perverted has, in all ages, been more frequent than the unperverted application. Laws and penalties have hindered more truth, and protected more error than all causes beside. They have been the citadels of error, and batteries against the truth. If, as incident to free inquiry, there should be the busy licentiousness of the press in the propagation of error, it must be so—it is in this imperfect state, inseparable from civil and religious liberty. Nothing on earth is perfect; but the unrestrained collision of mind with mind, is a lesser evil than coercive attempts at regulation, and in its results the nearest approximation to a perfect condition of society, of which human nature admits. It taxes the intellectual energies of the friends of christianity and liberty, and brings out an energy of mind, and a blaze of truth, and an intensity of benevolent activity, which will in its movements produce a greater diffusion of correct opinion, and exalt society to a higher eminence than it otherwise would have attained, without the excitement and efforts created by resistance.

All these efforts then, at perverting the mind and corrupting the heart of the nation, must be met by argument.

Truth is based on evidence, reason, and utility, while error has nothing to stand upon, and no weapons but sophistry for its defence, and if with such vantage ground the friends of truth

cannot, or will not, maintain their cause, they ought to perish in its ruins.

As atheism is at present the predominant type of the sceptical mania, those who are set for the defence of the truth, and all intelligent men should be well versed in the whole argument for the being of a God, and in all the wily and popular sophistry by which it is assailed. The argument as conducted by Paley, in his Natural Theology, is popular, and for all who will read it, and are willing to be convinced, may suffice. But while the mania rages many will breathe the infected atmosphere, who have no access to this particular antidote—the remedy needs of course a minuter form and a wider dispersion, and demands at present the more frequent agency of the pulpit, and the constant dropping of paragraphs in periodicals and newspapers, and the omnipresent instruction of tracts.

In conversation also, at home and by the way side, it behooves the friends of truth, not only ecclesiastics but laymen, to be able to give a reason for their christian hope, and by sound argument to convince gainsayers—for the disease is as anti-philosophical, as it is anti-christian, and he is not worthy the name or the station of a patriot watchman, who does not descry the approaching evil, and set himself seriously to guard the community against its invasion.

This nation is destined to become universally a reading nation, and may be, by

timely care, guarded efficaciously against the follies and mischiefs of political atheists; but care and effort is indispensable, for, since their discomfiture by Dwight and a host of others, a generation has arisen, to whom their cavils are now new, and the answers of other days unknown. The time was when Dwight ceased to preach upon the evidences of christianity, so entirely had the mania of infidelity passed away; but, as if to take vengeance for past defeat, it has rushed by surprise upon the existing unarmed generation, and the battle must be fought over again, and probably for the last time, before that wicked one will be destroyed by the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming.

But to meet the exigencies of the new generation, the evidences of christianity should be made familiar to the entire rising generation, from the pulpit, and in tracts, in popular familiar argument, and in little manuals formed for the libraries of every sabbath and common school.

Especially is it important that the bible should be studied and explained, in all our colleges and elevated schools—its chronology, history, geography, mental philosophy, and natural history; its doctrines, arguments, eloquence, poetry, taste, inspiration, and the elementary principles of its interpretation.

The bible read and understood, is in no danger of losing its ascendency, as an inspired book, over the understanding, and the conscience,

and the heart. It is ignorance of the bible, which is the parent of infidelity, and gives to its specious arguments power over the common mind. A system of well studied interpretation, would sweep away every objection, and bring every knee to bow and every tongue to confess.

But argument alone is not all which the present exigency demands. The doctrines of political atheists are the consummation of folly, and ample justice cannot be done, in defending the community against them, without the touch of irony, which shall take off their fair disguises, and exhibit their unsightly proportions and combinations. Truth can never be made ridiculous, but by caricature. Error can never be presented as it is, without the ludicrous; the more accurately and vividly you portray its elementary principles, the more you develope its absurdities, and cover it with ridicule. There is no malignity in this. The entire beauty and power of truth cannot be felt, but in the presence of the odious, and ridiculous contrast—and public justice demands it. If the exhibition produce laughter, the fault is in the thing exhibited, not in the exhibiter. There are principles so ridiculous that grave debate exalts them to a consequence of bad eminence, to which, otherwise, they could not attain; and in such case inspiration has directed us to answer a fool according to his folly. There is, on this subject, no small amount of incorrect opinion and fastidious feeling

among good men, from not considering duly, the place and use, and lawfulness and necessity of ridicule. All diseases do not demand the caustic, but there are sores that will yield to nothing else. Ridicule is the most potent weapon with which christianity is assailed, and there is no doubt that in its proper place, it is one of the most powerful weapons of discomfiture to the assailant, and defence to the cause.

There is one other remedy more potent than all—it is the united and emphatic decision of public sentiment, against these irreligious and licentious opinions. There is nothing which these marauders so much fear, of which they so loudly complain, as their outlawry by public sentiment: they call it bigotry, malignancy, intolerance and persecution.

The liberty they claim, is the liberty of thinking as they please, without the responsibility of any reacting opinion—of opening upon christian societies and institutions, their batteries of invective, ridicule and denunciation, without the perils of a return fire—the right of universal denunciation, with the modest demand of universal approbation and eulogy. But we are not so fond of this moral martyrdom, and while we would not apply penal sanctions, God forbid that we should withhold the steady withering frown of outraged and indignant virtue—there is no other effectual resistance. Whenever the public discrimination between truth and error, and common sense and folly, and moral purity and

pollution, shall falter, so that profligate men shall encounter no reproving eye, and irreligious men no reaction of the public mind, then are the flood gates open, and the stream of pollution is rolling deep and rapid under the foundations of our institutions, and it will be but a moment, before, like Babylon, they will sink never to rise.

I cannot close this lecture without calling around me, in imagination, and with feelings of great respect and affection, the labouring classes of this nation, whose religious and political faith, these men would subvert.

My beloved countrymen:—if there is an eye in the universe that pities you, or a heart that feels for you, or a hand stretched out for *your* protection especially—it is the eye, and the heart and the hand of heaven—it is *your* cause, that the christian revelation espouses. No other religion ever cared for the common people, ever brought them within the reach of instruction, or ever elevated them to intelligence and competence and virtue. In all Pagan, Mahometan, and Papal lands, they are in deep darkness and in chains, beneath grievous burthens. It is the bible and the sabbath, and the preaching of the gospel, and the schools, and the virtue, and the enterprise, and the equality, which christianity creates, which dispels the darkness, and opens the prison door, and knocks off the chains, and breaks off the yoke, and takes off the burdens, which have in all nations

and ages been the lot of persons in your condition.

Infidels are republicans in theory and in tongue, but not in deed and in truth. They are not your friends; but God *is* your friend. He has predicted and projected, and will accomplish your elevation. Jesus Christ is your friend. He was born of virtuous and industrious parents, in humble life; he performed your labours, felt your cares, bore in his own body your sorrows, and can be and is touched with the feeling of your infirmities. He knows how to emancipate, and elevate you, and mitigate the curse which has for ages rested so heavily upon you. But these infidel philosophers are blind, ignorant, untaught, and unteachable masters; who, while they promise you liberty, are themselves the servants of sin; and while they offer to raise you, will thrust you down to deeper poverty, and reckless animalism, and wretchedness.

What nation have they ever emancipated, but by a revolution, more terrific than despotism? What well ordered republic have they ever formed and maintained a single year? What community have they enlightened and purified? Where are the schools and colleges, for the sons of the poor, which they have founded? What single family have they blessed with purer affections, and augmented industry, and domestic peace? What single heart have they ever made better by the extinction of evil passions, and the nurture of benevolence? What vicious man have they reclaimed,

what poor man have they made rich, what miserable man have they sustained by their philosophy, in life or in death?

Well meaning they may be, but it is the well meaning of ignorant and foolish men—ignorant of the bible, ignorant of history, ignorant of human nature, and those moral causes which have always been auspicious or pernicious—not knowing what they say, or whereof they affirm. Reckless are they of their own and of your best good; wanton, rash, and desperate are they in their experiments; moral maniacs, more utterly bereft of common sense than any other class of men who ever set up for guides and challenged confidence. The evidence cannot be heightened of the falsehood and folly of their system. Should they propose a system of agriculture, which reversed every one of the known principles of natural philosophy, it would not surpass the violence which their system does to the equally well known, and established laws of mind, society, and moral government. That righteousness, such as they despise, exalteth a nation, and sin, such as they eulogize, is the destruction of a people, is as certain as the laws of vision or of gravity.

It is hard to elevate the mass, and harder to sustain, and none but by the help of God and his institutions have been able to do it. Christianity is the world's last hope for civil liberty; if this will not diversify the results of national prosperity, then are we with rapid strides making

for the precipice, and preparing to bid a long farewell to all our liberty. You must reject these evil counsellors. You must appreciate the bible, or you and yours will soon fall back into that state of hopeless ignorance and poverty, and vice, from which there is no resurrection. The priestcraft which has darkened and enslaved the world, is one which has rejected or sequestered the bible: not that which gave it to the common people, and preached the gospel to the poor. It is christianity which introduces universal liberty, which equalizes and elevates, and it is its absence which puts you down. The conspiracy against your liberties is forming by those who would banish from you the day of rest, and intellectual and moral improvement, and doom you and your families to toil seven days instead of six without the least increase of remuneration. This it is which will unintellectualize the labouring classes, and throw them back into the distance beyond the light of hope, and the reach of successful competition. If you wish to be free indeed, you must be virtuous, temperate, well instructed, with the door of honor and profit open to you, and to your children. As the sun draws up the whole body of the ocean it passes over, raising the tide in the career of his glorious way, so will the sun of righteousness take hold of you and your families and raise them up, and bring them within the constant attraction of hope and virtue. Those who wish for the preservation of the sabbath, are

not bigots; they do not seek a union of church and state; they seek the unextinguished lustre of that moral sun for your sake, who with it will rise and without it will go down to where all the laboring classes of the world have been, and now are—whom the bible and the sabbath have not emancipated and elevated.

It is the agriculturists, merchants, manufacturers and day laborers, of the nation, who must decide its destiny. It is your hearts that must be the sanctuary of liberty; and your conscience that must stand sentinel, to prevent her perversion, and your bodies that must constitute a rampart around those holy and blessed institutions of heaven, which God has given to man in the bible—whose blessings our fathers with toil and blood put in motion, and which with augmenting prosperity, at every step, have come down and are now rolling around us like the waves of the sea; blessings which urge themselves upon us, and from which we cannot flee, and whose blest intrusion we cannot resist, but by taking counsel once more to break the bands of christ, and cast away his cords from us. We need not petition congress to spare the sabbath,—if they do, the people can desecrate the sacred day—the people must decide, each man for himself and his family, whether he will live under the government of God, and enjoy its sunshine, and breathe its liberty, and be elevated by its power and sanctified by its pu-

rity, and blessed by its exuberant, unnumbered and inexhaustible blessings; or, go back to the midnight of ignorance, and the bondage of corruption.

LECTURE VI.

THE

ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTER

OF

GOD.

EXODUS XXXIV. 6, 7.

AND THE LORD PASSED BY BEFORE HIM, AND PROCLAIMED, THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONG-SUFFERING, AND ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH, KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS, FORGIVING INIQUITY, AND TRANSGRESSION, AND SIN, AND THAT WILL BY NO MEANS CLEAR THE GUILTY; VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN, AND UPON THE CHILDRENS' CHILDREN, UNTO THE THIRD AND TO THE FOURTH GENERATION.

GREAT errors in doctrine, result usually from mistaken conceptions of the attributes and character of God. There are two extremes to which the mind is liable: the one is to regard the divine being only in his public character, as the lawgiver of the universe; and his power, and wisdom, and goodness only as they are manifested in his public relations in the government of a sinful world.

In one view, all which is dark, and terrible, and irresistible, is gathered about him—all which is spotless in purity, and vehement in his hatred of sin, and inexorable in its punishment. He is surrounded by fire, and storms, and earthquakes, and pestilence, and war—the symbols of present and coming wrath—his eye is fixed on public justice, and his heart glows with a benevolence too vast to hold sympathetic communion with the guilty and the miserable.

Though there is some truth in these views, in their place and proportion, they are not the whole truth, and therefore misrepresent the character of God almost as fearfully as if they were false. They constitute a dark cloud, behind which all heaven's artillery is put in action, to extinguish hope, and keep a rebel world in a state of terror and reckless desperation.

And they are doubly injurious, because, ever since the fall the fear of God has usurped the place of filial confidence, and has been excessive. A dread of him is upon the mind of guilty man, which, in imitation of the first pair, leads him to flee and hide from his presence.

In all false religions, fear has ever been the predominant principle of worship; and rage, and cruelty the principles to be appeased. And even where the light of the gospel has shined, and its voice has proclaimed peace, the quaking, and standing afar off, has not ceased. God to the eye of guilt and unbelief, appears too great, too distant, and too much engrossed with his vast con-

cerns of state, and too holy and too just to inspire with confidence the guilty, and bring them with humble boldness near. It is the object, therefore, of God, in the gospel, to reassure his ruined guilty creatures, of his unextinguished kindness for them, and to bring them back sanctified and forgiven, to his fellowship and favor.

It is no doubt important, that man should be well certified of the holiness and justice of God; and that ultimately, he will, by no means, clear the guilty. But to overcome the panic, and bring the full and saving power of the gospel upon alienated mind, it is not less important, that sinners should be made to feel that God loves and pities them, than that he abhors sin, and will not fail to punish. Compassion alone would create presumption, and justice alone desperation. The mingled influence of both is needed to alarm the sinner to flee from wrath, and to allure him with humble boldness to fly to God by Jesus Christ.

But instead of this justly balanced exhibition, many rush into the opposite extreme. They divest the most holy intirely of public responsibilities, regarding him only in the capacity of a benevolent individual, consulting alone the direct impulse of kind feeling, without any reference to the general consequences. They cancel all the public responsibilities of Jehovah to the universe as its moral governor. With the magic wand of unbelief, they dispel the darkness round about his throne, and put out the fires, and stop the

mighty thunderings, and the voice of the trumpet, and array with smiles the face of heaven alike upon the righteous and the wicked—destined, by dint of omnipotence, to those transformations which shall consummate their meetness for heaven, and make them happy.

The fact is too evident to be denied, that both the majestic and terrific, the gentle and the winning exhibitions of the divine character are contained in the bible, and are correct exhibitions of the divine mind, as its attributes and character are developed in the creation and government of the intelligent universe. In the administration of moral government, there is occasion also for these seemingly opposite attributes and exhibitions of character. They are harmonious and indispensable to a perfect character, and to the administration of a perfect moral government.

It will be the object, therefore, of this lecture, to give a concise account of the attributes and character of God, as disclosed in his works, and revealed in the bible.

This will be especially important, because correct conceptions of the relations of God to the universe, as its lawgiver—of his providence, as the administration of a moral government—of his word, as a system of remedial legislation for the recovery to holiness of lost subjects, and correct definitions of his attributes, natural and moral, as displayed in this great work—include a large portion of the elementary principles of theology,

while false conceptions of his attributes and character, hang sackcloth about the sun of righteousness, and break the main-spring of his government. We observe, then,

1. That God is a spirit.

By spirit, we do not mean that nondescript, unthinking, undesigning energy, denominated nature—that all-pervading soul of the universe—the fountain of effervescence and fermentation—the volcanic centre of emanation, and subsequent attraction and absorption—the flint and steel for the scintillation of mind, to fall back, in due time, into the form of fixed caloric. Such mysticism we abandon to those who can comprehend it, or love to dream amid the repetition of beautiful uncertain sounds, and glittering, undefined images.

By spirit, we mean mind, as opposed to matter—intelligence, acting by design, as opposed to instinct—and diversified volition, in the view of motives, as opposed to an unthinking, irresistible necessity—a mind capable of intense desire, of permanent choice—the selection of its chief good, and of plan and subordinate volition and action, for its attainment—of copious affections, and social affinities, and high enjoyment—capable, in subjects, of government by law and the rewards and punishments of an eternal state.

Of the essence of mind or matter, we say nothing, because we know nothing. All we know of either, being by their attributes, as displayed in cause and effect. That they are different existences we conclude, because they dis-

close no attributes in common; and all their phenomena are different, so that it might as well be insisted, that matter is spiritual, as that mind is material—there being no foundation for saying either, but all possible evidence to the contrary. The only evidence of different material substances, is, their different effects; and if the different phenomena of mind and matter do not evidence different existences, there would be no evidence to disprove the perfect homogeneity and identity of all things.

But that there is a difference between matter and mind is evident from the total absence of intelligence, thought, and voluntary, accountable action in the one, and its continual presence with the other.

Should any insist that matter does think, and desire, and love, and hate, and choose, and refuse, and deserve reward and punishment, and feel remorse, and praise, and blame, it must be admitted that we live in a most feeling, thinking world, and most wonderfully bashful too, and tenacious of concealment, considering how long and in how many ways it has been provoked—trodden on by the foot, vexed by the plough, tortured in the crucible, and subjected to mastication, and digestion, and transformations innumerable. If matter thinks and feels separately, each particle by itself, or mechanically in the partnership of atoms, that no indignation under such provocation should have emanated, no impatience been indicated, no groans

extorted from its multitude of poor dumb mouths, is truly wonderful.

But if matter is voluntary, and wicked, and, as the Gnostics supposed, the quintessence of moral contamination, then chemistry may cease its lucubrations about the causes of earthquakes and volcanic fire. Doubtless they are the spasms of a guilty material conscience, and the hell for material punishment. Should it be insisted that mind does not think as a percipient voluntary entity, but acts on mechanical principles, as a clock ticks, and that thoughts are turned out by the movements of the machine, great or small, light or weighty, according to the pattern, as molten lead falls down the shot tower; and that passions, affections, and volitions are only as the effervescence of alkalies and acids, or the salutation of negative and positive batteries; in that case, we shall be permitted ever to admire the accident by which that which does not act, think, and choose with intelligent accountability, should have conducted itself so exactly through all periods of time, as if it did.

2. God is eternal.

No effect can exist without a cause. Nothing to the intuition of mind is more certain than this. It is a self-evident proposition, and the basis of all knowledge; for if effects can exist without a cause, we are yet to acquire the evidence that any thing exists at all. For existence is known only by its attributes, and attributes only by the effects they produce. But if effects may exist

without a cause, they no longer evidence the existence of any attributes or any existence whatever.

But all which the eye falls upon, and the mind contemplates, presents itself in the form of an effect. No man is the author of his own being and powers. Each is dependent as an effect upon some antecedent cause. But as there is design manifested in body and in mind, there must, in each case, or some where in the series, be design in the antecedent cause; for perpetual design, without any designer, would be an effect without a cause, as really and more wonderfully than the existence of the material universe without a cause. If then there ever was a period in which finite minds did not exist, there must have existed an eternal intelligence and power, equal to their formation.

Should it be said, as it has been said, that each mind in the series is dependent, but the series is eternal, this is only to escape the difficulty, by pushing it back into darkness; for either every individual in this series had a *beginning*, or some one in it is eternal. But if there be an eternal cause of the series, it must be self-existent, and it must be commensurate to the effects which it produces, and considering what the mind and body of man is, the self-existent cause of the mind of man must be God. If, to escape the dilemma, you say that no one mind in the series is self-existent and eternal—all had a beginning, and each is dependent on the other, this is only

to augment, at every step backward, the absurdity of accumulating effects without a cause.

Suppose a chain should be let down from an unknown height, and I should ask one of these philosophers what it hangs upon. Would it answer to say, the lower link hangs on the next? But what does the second, the third, the tenth, the thousandth hang on? Each on the link above,—but what is the great staple, with something above it, which holds up the whole? There is none. The whole chain hangs on nothing. No single link of it could be sustained without a link above, but the intire chain hangs on nothing.

The intire universe, then, of dependencies, rises up around us, proclaiming with trumpet-tongue, that he who made us is divine. With shield of adamant, they turn aside sceptical cavils; and with sword and spear, drive us to the conclusion, that he who made all things is God.

3. God is self-existent.

The meaning is not that God is self-created, which would be a contradiction; nor that he is self-sustained, implying that his existence depends on his own voluntary effort to perpetuate his being; but that his existence is underived, and independent of external causes, and as incapable of cessation as of beginning—that his continuance no more depends on choice, than his underived, eternal being; and that unending, unchanged existence belongs to the very nature of God, as really as dependence and mutability belong to all which is created. This is the tes-

timony of reason; for why should that which is underived, and independent of any outward cause, and has existed from eternity, ever cease to be? It is also the testimony of the bible: "I am that I am;"—"With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;"—"From everlasting to everlasting thou art God."

4. God is omniscient.

He knows all real and all possible things. Otherwise there would be no evidence of the absolute perfection and immutability of his purposes and their execution. For if all that is possible to infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power, were not open and naked before him, he might form defective plans, and make discoveries and changes by experience. But before he commenced creation, known unto God were all his works. The immensity of the diversified possibility of things lay open before him; from the intire of which, wisdom and goodness selected the system which should be. To this system, in all its attributes, parts, dependencies, and movements, and results, his knowledge extends, through all its existence of past, present and future. It does not, however, follow from this, as some have supposed, that to the divine mind there is no such thing as the succession of events, and that to him, present, past, and future, are one eternal now. That there are no successive developments of knowledge to the divine mind, is certain. That all truths and facts were present to the mind of God, from eternity, and are always present, none

can doubt; but then his knowledge is correct knowledge. He sees things as they *are*. Unless, therefore, all events co-exist, and are *actually* one eternal now, they cannot appear to be so to God, without supposing his mind to be under a palpable delusion. There is a difference, a real, actual difference, between past, and present, and future; between an event which has come to pass, and one which is yet to be; and no doubt, to the divine mind, while all existence is known constantly and clearly, as if it were present before him, it is known as actual existence only in the order in which it becomes such. The relations of past, present, and future existence are real, and therefore, are as real to the divine mind, as to human minds.

The omniscience of God is taught in the bible, in language worthy of the theme, and of the mind who moved the holy men of old to give it utterance. "I am a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off;"—"Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him?"—"Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."

5. God is omnipresent.

This is to be understood only of his knowledge and constant efficiency throughout all his works. Of the essence of spirit, if there be such a thing, distinct from its developed attributes, we know nothing, and the scriptures say nothing That God fills immensity, as matter occupies space, is not the form in which his omnipres-

ence is taught in the bible; but that, as the human mind exerts its wisdom, and benevolence, and powers, on all parts of the material system it inhabits and controls, in like manner, the energy of the divine mind extends constantly to the upholding and government of the intire universe.

The ubiquity of the divine inspection, support, and government, extends alike both to the natural and moral universe—to matter and to mind—to physical and to moral government—it being to Jehovah just as practicable to execute his purposes of moral government by moral influence, as to control the material movements of the universe by his direct omnipotence. The omnipresence of God is most forcibly and most beautifully taught in the following language of the 139th Psalm:

"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and know me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising: thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the

uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

6. God is almighty.

He can do all things which are in their nature possible.

Contradictions are impossibilities. To cause a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time, is an impossibility. To make a circle square, and a square round—to make happiness misery, and misery happiness—to make selfishness and envy right, and benevolence wrong—to make matter spirit, or spirit matter,—or to govern each by the same laws and means—*all* these would be *contradictions*—things impossible to any power. *But in respect to things possible*, "*all* things are possible" with God. His power is infinite and unlimited. There is in it no deficiency to accomplish any possible thing, and no obstacle to hinder or make it difficult. The intire field of universal possibility is open to his power. He is the Lord God Almighty, the scriptures affirm, and his works declare it. He can create—can originate being—can command a universe to arise up around him, where before emptiness and silence reigned.

It is to be observed, that the power of God is always associated indissolubly with infinite

wisdom and benevolence, and is limited only by the wise and benevolent constitution which God has given to things, and the laws which he has adopted for their most perfect government. There is nothing in its nature possible, which God cannot do—and yet, there are innumerable things, in their nature possible to be done, which God will not do, because it would not be possible to bring them in as parts of the wisest and best system; because, without abandoning the wisest and best system, he *could not do them.* He could, so far as power is concerned, pardon sin without an atonement; but he could not make it a wise and benevolent act, in the administration of the best possible system of moral government. He is as able, so far as power is concerned, to utter falsehood as truth. But he is not able—no power is competent to make falsehood as wise and benign in moral government, as immutable truth.

It is to be remembered that the power of God in the government of the natural and moral world, corresponds always with the nature of the subject—the one, he governs by his power acting on the attributes which he has given to matter; the other, by his power acting upon mind, through the intervention of motives contained in his law, gospel, and providence, and administered and made effectual by his spirit. In the material universe, he can do all by his power direct on matter, which his perfect plan demands; and in the world of intellect, and free agency, and accountability,

he can do all by his laws and providence, and their administration by his spirit, which his hand and counsel has determined to be done. He never decreed to govern the sun by the ten commandments, nor to govern free, accountable mind, by direct irresistible omnipotence.

7. God is good.

The preceding are his natural attributes, which appertain to his being, independent of choice, and without character, and are desirable or terrible as they are employed in the dissemination of good or evil. Happiness and misery are the two opposites—the good and the evil of the universe; and natural causes are useful or pernicious as they produce the one or the other, and intelligent beings are benevolent or malignant, as they prefer the one to the other, and consecrate their powers to their extension and perpetuity.

Benevolence, then, is the love of doing good—of communicating and perpetuating enjoyment.

In the divine being, it is not one of several attributes, but his intire moral nature—the generic principle of his glorious moral excellence. It is not an instinct, but an enlightened preference of good to evil, and of doing good to doing evil.

It is not a blind impulse of some irresistible fatality. God is a free agent, and in the selection of his own chief end, acts as voluntarily as his creatures, in the selection of their highest good. He exists by necessity, and all his natural attributes are independent of his choice. But

his moral excellence, is in its fountain, and in all its streams, perfectly voluntary. There are intelligences who are selfish: they seek their own exclusively. The communication of good is not their supreme desire. They are like the vortex which swallows all which falls within its scope—crying give, and never saying it is enough. They find no pleasure in the communication of good, as their chief end, but rather in its monopoly. But the divine mind is like an ocean, of immeasurable circumference, unfathomable depth, and inexhaustible fulness—ever spontaneously overflowing in the communication of enjoyment.

This benevolence of God, though vast, is also minute in its inspection, and impartial in its administration. All beings are regarded with good will, according to their capacity, and with complacency, according to their character and deeds.

It includes, of course, his own well-being, as the greatest good, and the well-being of the universe as involved in the stability of his counsels, and the prosperity of his kingdom, and extends to every creature capable of enjoyment, from angel to insect, with an impartiality which none but God himself can graduate.

It is a benevolence which is pure aud unmingled. In convalescent human nature, it exists in alliance with great defects, of passion, and selfishness, and pride; but in God it is not so. There is no spot on his sun. God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. Pure as crystal are the

waters which flow from the throne of God and the Lamb.

The benevolence of God is also infinite. It is great like his power, and immense like his being. All created intellect, condensed into one mind, would be but a ray compared with the eternal mind, and all the benevolence which warms the hearts of holy beings, united, would constitute but a drop, when compared with the ocean of his love. It is a height, and depth, and length, and breadth, which cannot be comprehended.

It is also a principle of omnipotent, constant eternal action. It is the nature of mind to act, and the blessedness of benevolent minds to act in doing good; and it is in his untiring, uninterrupted benevolent activity that he is God over all, blessed forever.

8. God is just.

The justice of God is his benevolence and wisdom, expressed in the administration of rewards and punishments, for the public good, according to the character and deeds of his subjects.

The existence of intelligent beings and accountability is indispensable to the greatest amount of enjoyment, and law is indispensable to the propitious government of mind, and reward and punishment is indispensable to the moral influence of law. Were God, then, to create a universe of mind, capacious of enjoyment, and pressed by desire, and its own impatient activity, without guidance and competent motive to render obedience reasonable, and

sin inexcusable, it would be no evidence of goodness, but rather of cruelty; and to annex sanctions which are never to be realized, would be to set forth the form of government without the reality.

Justice in God is not, then, as to many it would seem, a dark, frowning attribute—a stern, unfeeling severity; but the benevolent, conservatory principle of the universe, by which the Lord God Almighty maintains the empire of righteousness, and extends around him the blessedness of an eternal day. Were the governing intelligence of the universe impotent, or indolent, or cruel, or capricious, or partial, his administration might well be dreaded. But while benevolence and mercy are mingled with justice, and not a stroke of the rod falls, which incorrigible wickedness and the public good do not render just and indispensable, none but determined rebels have cause to fear.

Is justice in human governments a cold-hearted despotism? Who does not call for it when his character is assailed, when his rights of property are invaded, or his life is threatened, or when public insurrections threaten to put an end to the safeguard of law? And no class of men are more eulogized as the benefactors of mankind, than those of incorruptible integrity, and unflinching courage, who hold the balance even, on the judgment seat? No good man has any pleasure in the punishment of a sinning fellow being; but he has pleasure in the public purity, and happi-

ness, which the prostration of law, and the prevalence of anarchy would destroy.

What should we think of the chief magistrate of a nation, sworn to see that the commonwealth receives no detriment, smitten with such tender-heartedness for pirates and robbers, as would let out desolation to sweep over land and sea, because he could not find it in his heart to punish the guilty? There is nothing but justice which stands between any government, human or divine, and contempt and anarchy. And can it be thought desirable, and amiable in God, that he should lay aside the sword, and turn a face of smiles alike on the evil and the good, in this world of moral madness, and self-destruction? Is it considered that the most wretched possible condition of human beings, is that in which judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, and truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter? That the most lovely feature of a republic is the mild but efficient administration of equal laws—and the most repelling feature in despotism is its injustice—and the most intolerable scourge of anarchy its injustice—and that the most terrific circumstance in the world of wo, is its outlawry from all protection and benefit from the moral government of God, and its abandonment to unrestrained malignity, and everlasting anarchy?

9. God is merciful.

Mercy is the exercise of benevolence in the reformation and forgiveness of the guilty, in ways

consistent with the influence of law, and the safety of the intelligent universe.

In a state of loyalty, the divine benevolence flows full and unobstructed to every individual. Transgression, while it does not extinguish his good will, renders the practical expression of it impracticable, and demands the interposition of penal evil for the protection of law and order.

The atonement, received by faith, places the subject in such relations to Christ, as that public justice does not demand his punishment, or forbid his forgiveness and restoration to favor, but opens wide the channel which sin had obstructed for his mercy to flow in; and God, who has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth—who never punishes because it is deserved, but always only because the public good demands it—now, released from the public necessity of punishment, in the exercise of mercy, freely pardons the believer, and receives him into favor. Mercy, then, is the personal benevolence of Jehovah, flowing in unison with public good, in the reformation and forgiveness of lost men.

It is a mercy, however, which always sees to it, that the commonwealth receives no detriment, and which moves only in the train of public justice satisfied, and the public good protected. In close alliance with mercy, it may be added that God is slow to anger, and of great patience. Human passions are ascribed to God, not as *identical* with what exists in the divine mind, but as ana-

logical. The metaphor has always some resemblance to that which it represents.

Between anger, as ascribed to God and to man, there is the coincidence of strong disapprobation and emphatic action in the infliction of evil; but with this difference, that in man, the impulse is malignant, while in God it is benevolent. In man it is personal revenge; in God it is public justice, for benevolent purposes.

Long suffering *implies* that public justice does not always demand the immediate execution of the deserved evil, and that always God is disposed to defer the infliction as long, and to continue the means of reformation as long as the public good will permit.

We may not omit to add that God is full of compassion.

Compassion is sympathy for the afflicted and miserable. But such is the immensity of the divine nature, and the extent of his creation, and the magnitude and number of his worlds, and works, and the majesty and fulness of his benevolence, as it flows in the channels of his general laws, that single minds are tempted to feel as if the heart which guides the universe, and wakes about the throne the song, and pours through eternity the tide of joy, could not stoop to hear the sigh of secret sorrow, or move with sympathetic compassion and personal friendship for the distressed, and much less, that he in whose sight the heavens are not clean, will not look down with affectionate compassion upon the guilty and ill

deserving. Nor is it till we have considered the adaptation of his capacity to the minutest, as well as to the greatest of his works, and the condescension of his benevolence, to the most limited as well as to the greatest capacities he has formed; and added to these, the reiterated declarations of his compassion contained in his word, that we can bring home, realizingly and efficaciously, the sense of his presence with us, and constant, benignant care, and quick and real sympathy. But it is only as the vastness of his being, the extent of his works, the glory of his laws and moral government and their administration are considered—in alliance with all the nearness and tenderness of parental affection—that the intire character of God comes out upon the soul, and all his claims to our confidence and love are felt, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin is realized, and the riches of his goodness apprehended in providing a Redeemer, and with such a sacrifice of feeling to himself and to his son, as must be implied in giving him up, to suffering and to death, that we might be delivered from shame, and live forever.

It is the concentration of these majestic and touching traits of the divine character—this union of the vast with the minute; of strength with tenderness; of justice with mercy, and self-existent blessedness with the most gentle movements of compassion and sympathy, which melts instantly the heart it touches, and renders the moral power of the gospel, in the hand of the spirit, omnipotent. Nor is it to be anticipated that until

the clouds of a false philosophy about the character of God are dispelled, and its full-orbed mildness, and radiance, and power are let out upon the world, that nation after nation will fall down before him as the sun of righteousness rolls his subduing light over the earth, encountering little beside opposition, and leaving in his train nothing but loyalty and praise.

But to hold up our faith to these blessed visions of the divine character, and to arm our ministry and the exhortations, and prayers of the church with power, we shall do well to remember that the greatness of the power and wisdom, and goodness of God, is illustrated in the formation of minds—every one of which, as lost or saved, and subject to the endless and augmenting knowledge of good or evil, is of more importance than the intire material universe.

The condition of a perverted mind is also well calculated to lay hold upon the susceptibilities of benevolence, and of none more than of the mind of him who formed the ruined agent, and comprehends the good rejected, and the evil chosen—the amplitude of the remedy, the urgent sincerity of its offer, and the voluntariness of its rejection, while the incorrigible ingrate is moving onward to the crisis of a confirmed and everlasting madness—where insatiable desire, and pinching famine, and wounded pride, and rankling envy, and fear, and ferocious hate, and terror, and sinking of heart, and lamentation, and despair will occupy the ever coming periods of duration.

Miserable innocence, exposed only to temporary evils, would not fail to participate in the compassion of the Deity; but how much more moving are the exhibitions of miserable guilt, exposed to evils which will never end, and obstinately regardless of deliverance.

Nor does the immensity of the divine mind, or the extent of its supervision disqualify or disincline for minute, constant, and kind attention. When he projected creation, he understood his resources, and has not set for himself a task too hard. The Almighty fainteth not, neither is weary, and the watchman of Israel never slumbers—but superintends, with equal ease, the orbs whose being we learn from the telescope, and those minutest mites of animated being which the microscope brings up to our knowledge, from the downward distance. Minute and great are alike in respect to the adaptation of his powers, or the claims of mind on his benevolence.

It is consistent with the purity of his holiness, and his public character as the supreme executive of the universe, that he should feel compassion for the miserable and the guilty. It implies no complacency in sinful character, and no faltering of purpose in respect to the claims of public justice—but renders his administration more lovely, sure and terrible to the incorrigible—that it is the unchanging award of a benevolence full of compassion, but yet will by no means clear the guilty.

It is compassion, mingled with parental govern-

ment and discipline, which gives it loveliness and tone. It is compassion in human governments, mingling with justice, which takes off the appearance of cruelty, and makes them a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well.

Nor need our faith in the compassion of the Deity be shaken by the strong and terrible expressions contained in the bible, of his abhorrence of sin—his anger, wrath, fury, and unalterable determination to punish it. Metaphors express analogies, but not exact identity. There must be points of resemblance to render one thing the symbol of another; and how are conceptions of the movements of the divine mind to be communicated, but by the aid of some analogous movement of the human mind with which we are acquainted? Now anger includes strong moral disapprobation, and a strong purpose of inflicting evil, only with this difference, that in man, malignity and revenge is the spring of action, while in God it is benevolence in the form of public justice. It is, then, a suitable, forcible, terrific imagery, to speak of God as angry, wroth, incensed, full of indignation and fury. But it expresses only by the power of metaphor, the strength of his aversion to sin—the intensity of his purpose to punish it, and the terrible effects of public justice when the work of desolation shall begin. Anger in God is not malignant feeling—not any thirsting for the blood of the slain—not any pleasure in suffering, or an opportunity to inflict it—nothing which will prevent compassion, even while

the tide of desolation rolls—nothing which will obscure the bow, and a smiling sky to him that is humble and of a contrite heart, and believeth in Jesus.

Nor is the exercise of compassion inconsistent with the blessedness of God, if to any it should seem to be so. God understands his own character; and we are not permitted to thrust up the lamp of our philosophy, to prove that he he has misdescribed his capabilities and emotions. But the delicate and tender susceptibilities of a mighty mind, would appear to be as indispensable to its enjoyment, as vast emotious of unmingled pleasure; and quite indispensable to its fellowship with created minds, and especially so to revive the cofidence, and bring back to loyalty the dismayed, alienated, jealous, fearful hearts of a ruined world. How sweet is the voice of mercy to the desperate or despondent mind—how soul-subduing the notes of divine compassion on the ear of guilt—how sweet the tender cords of love, drawing the soul into fellowship with heaven, while, as yet, it half believeth not for joy. But it is enough that in believing in the sympathetic affections of the divine mind, we do not follow philosophy or fables, but divine testimony. God, who cannot lie, has caused it to be written, that he is God over all, blessed forever; and at the same time that he is full of compassion, not willing that any should perish, but desiring sincerely that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus.

THE END.

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